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No. 41

# The Drama



# The Grammar

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AND  
PUPILS



BY  
J. H. GREEN






VICTORIAN EDITION

# The Drama


IV

ITS HISTORY, LITERATURE  
AND INFLUENCE ON  
CIVILIZATION

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
ALFRED BATES, M. A.  
CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.



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**SHAKESPEARE AND CONTEMPORARIES**

*After an original painting by Ad. Hynais*

## SHAKESPEARE AND CONTEMPORARIES

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. SHAKESPEARE.  | 6. MOLIERE.         |
| 2. BEN. JONSON.  | 7. CORNEILLE.       |
| 3. FLETCHER.     | 8. RACINE.          |
| 4. LOPE DE VEGA. | 9. RUIZ DE ALARCON. |
| 5. CALDERON.     | 10. MORETO.         |

*Shakespeare (1) occupies here the place of honor—the middle of the picture—while at his right side stands Ben Jonson (2), who is shaking the friendly, outstretched hand of Fletcher (3), most likely to indicate the relatively same direction of their productions. The Spaniards in the picture are Lope de Vega (4) Calderon (5), Ruiz de Alarcon (9), and Moreto (10), and are balanced by the French dramatists of this classical period of the time of Louis XIV. The figure of Calderon, who is looking for some passage in a book, is a most brilliant composition, as well as the wreathed Moliere (6), next to whom the figure of Corneille (7) appears. The wigged Racine (8) occupies the extreme right of the picture.*





8

6

10 7

1

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9

5

3

4



# British Drama

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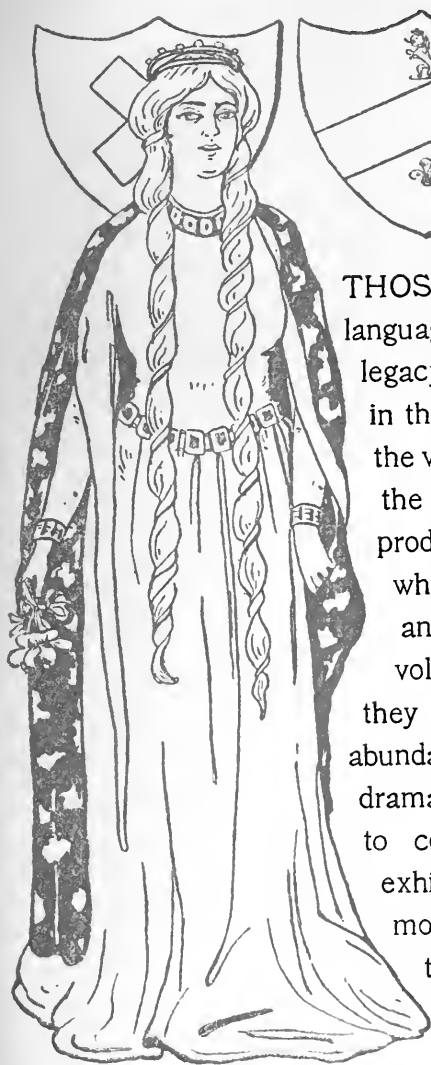
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# Prologue



THOSE who speak the English language inherit the grandest legacy of dramatic literature in the world. However wide the variety and however great the literary value of the productions of other races which have been selected and displayed in former volumes of this series, they are far outshone by the abundant riches of the English drama which we come now to consider. The previous exhibition of ancient and modern classics will certainly enhance the beauty and glory of

## PROLOGUE

those composed in our own tongue, and should increase our pride and delight in our heritage. Of course, in such a comparison the manifest preponderance is largely due to the cherished masterpieces of the myriad-minded Shakespeare. But even passing by his matchless name, the long roll of British dramatists is not excelled in number or in quality by that of any other people.

The early religious drama was discussed in a former volume. The secular drama began in the middle of the sixteenth century, and flourished in astonishing luxuriance throughout the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth. First came the interludes, which had been mere patches on the morality plays until Heywood raised them to an independent place, similar to modern farces. As an example of true comedy we present the earliest in the English language, *Ralph Roister Doister*, adapted from the Roman Plautus. At the same time, under the influence of Seneca, appeared the earliest English tragedy, *Gorboduc*. But the people turned from these imitations of the ancient classics, with livelier interest, to the chronicle-histories, which exhibited in vivid action the reigns of their own kings. To this department Shakespeare eventually made important contributions.

## PROLOGUE

Here we present *Edward II.* by Marlowe, his predecessor, who might possibly have equalled his great successor's achievements had not an untimely fate carried him off.

The first theatre in England was built in 1576. In it were performed the plays of Marlowe, Peele, Lyly, Greene and others. With them Shakespeare was associated, and gradually rose from an humble position to be manager and part-proprietor in the new Globe Theatre, built in 1599. Our readers have without doubt complete and valuable editions of his works, and it has therefore been thought superfluous to offer complete plays; but we give, however, a sufficient account of his career with a full synopsis and careful critical estimate of his various labors. From the overflowing abundance of material afforded by the contemporary dramatists we have selected as a sterling comedy, Massinger's *New Way to Pay Old Debts*.

In historical and literary value, as well as in artistic display, this volume will, therefore, maintain the degree of excellence which, we are assured by our patrons, has been reached in former issues.





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# English Drama.

## PART I.

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### I.

#### Development of the Secular Play in England.

The transition from the mediæval religious drama to the mystery and morality play has been traced in a preceding volume. The fashion of relieving the sombre tone of these representations by interludes of a frankly secular character was welcomed by the people as well as the players. Historical personages were first introduced, opening the door for a motley company of everyday characters whose actions and speech mirrored those of the local inhabitants. The natural trend of this extension of stage art was more decidedly toward comedy, high and low, but various controlling influences, not hard to trace, kept the tendency to satirical buffoonery in check and encouraged the taste for nobler aspirations.

When the influence of the Renaissance reached England, it lifted the puerile efforts of ecclesiastical playwrights into an atmosphere in which their crudities be-

came eyesores. Glimmerings of the relation of art to nature were gained through acquaintance with foreign models in literary and other work. A higher standard was set and was worthily striven after. In both serious and light dramatic productions the improvement was marked, and here began the grand development which reached its full glory in the Elizabethan drama.

John Heywood's interludes first pointed the way to the broader treatment of life and character in the miracle and mystery plays. Then, the study and imitation of the ancient classical drama were introduced into the English world of letters; and under their influence tragedy and comedy were in their early growths in our literature kept asunder, though not absolutely so. Translation was found the readiest form of expression offering itself to literary scholarship, and Italian examples helped to commend Seneca, the last of the ancient tragedians, as a favorite author for such exercises. With the year of Elizabeth's accession began a series of translations of his plays by Jasper Heywood—John Heywood's son—and others; and to the direct influence of one of Seneca's tragedies is to be ascribed the composition of the first tragedy proper in the English tongue, the *Gorboduc*—afterward renamed *Ferrex and Porrex*—of Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, with whom Thomas Norton was joint author.

### *The First English Tragedy.*

*Gorboduc* was first performed in London before Queen Elizabeth on January 18th, 1561. Modern criti-

cism pronounces it to be lacking in ease and variety, and overdone with prolix moralizings. This may be admitted, but is it gracious or just to judge Sackville's new departure by modern standards? The following is a brief outline of the play, as given in the Argument: "Gorboduc, king of Britain, divided his realm in his lifetime to his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to dissension. The younger killed the elder. The mother, that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the deed, rose in rebellion and slew father and mother. The nobility assembled and destroyed the rebels; and afterward, for want of issue of the prince, they fell to civil war, in which both they and many of their children were slain, and the land was for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted."

While the construction of the play is based on Seneca's *Thebais*, the subject is taken from British legend, the motive at the beginning being the same in essence as that of *King Lear*. Except for frequent changes of scene, a license borrowed from the Spaniards, the usages of the classic drama are followed. The murders, instead of taking place on the stage, are announced by messengers, as in the tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles. The acts are each preceded by a dumb show, in which the contents of that which is to follow are set forth in pantomime. This expedient was long in use on the early English stage, and finds a precedent in the Euripidean prologues. It belongs, however, to the infancy of the modern drama, and is but a poor substitute for lack of dramatic art. The incidents should

appear in the action, instead of being separately narrated, and in *Gorboduc* the heaviness of the movement is further increased by treating the fifth act as an epilogue.

*Gorboduc*, besides being the first tragedy, was the first English drama published in blank verse. In the following passage is an allusion to the suits of foreign princes for the hand of the virgin queen, referring probably to Eric of Sweden and Philip of Spain:

For right will last and wrong cannot endure;  
Right mean I his or hers upon whose name  
The people rest, by means of native line,  
Or by the virtue of some former law  
Already made their title to advance.  
Such one, my lords, let be your chosen king,  
Such one so born within your native land,  
Such one prefer, and in nowise admit  
The heavy yoke of foreign government.

### King Cambises.

Almost simultaneously with *Gorboduc* appeared *King Cambises*, classed by some authorities among the last of the Morality plays, but belonging rather to the earliest of English tragedies. Of the religious drama they have indeed certain essential elements, since many personified abstractions appear in both, the character of Vice being especially emphasized and vigorously developed. The interest, however, is distinctly historical and real, the leading personages being actual and supposedly historical human beings. The one good deed of Cambises—his condemnation to death of the wicked



judge Sisamnes, who has misgoverned the realm during the monarch's absence—is counterbalanced by so many evil deeds that he falls by a divine Nemesis, as predicted by Vice, who declares him akin to Bishop Bonner. The part which Vice takes in the more serious action is cleverly managed, and there is also much low fun and interchange of ribaldry between him and the three ruffians, Huf, Snuf and Ruf, and the rustics, Hob and Lob. The play was by Thomas Preston, a graduate of Cambridge, to whom Elizabeth granted a pension of twenty pounds a year, an unusual mark of munificence on the part of this close-fisted monarch.

*Apius and Virginia*, by an unknown author, appeared soon after *Gorboduc*. It is one of the rudest dramatizations of this favorite subject, now almost banished from the stage except in the *Virginus* of Sheridan Knowles. Yet, even this first effort is not without dramatic power. The tragedy—or tragical comedy, as it is styled—opens with a scene revealing the domestic bliss of Virginius, his wife and daughter, which they celebrate in dialogue and song, with the following refrain:

The trustiest treasure in earth as we see  
Is man, wife, and children in one to agree;  
Then friendly and kindly let measure be mixed  
With reason in season, where friendship is fixed.

This happiness continues until the criminal lust of Apius mars the picture. From this point the action progresses simply and regularly. In the epilogue a prayer is offered for the queen; but the oppor-

tunity is missed of which nearly all other dramatists of the time availed themselves—to celebrate the renown of the maiden queen for chastity.

### Bale's Chronicle Histories.

In this connection reference may be made to the dramas of Bishop Bale, which belong to an earlier date. Most of them were in the nature of Moral plays, and were specially directed against priestcraft; so that, on the accession of Mary, the author, who had been appointed to the Irish bishopric of Ossory, was compelled to flee to the continent, returning after her death to be appointed by her successor to a prebend's stall in Canterbury cathedral. Of the chronicle histories of Bale the most important is the *Kynge Johan*, which must not be confounded with the *Troublesome Raigne of John*, whence Shakespeare took the materials for his tragedy on the same subject. The bishop's play, published in 1548, was lost for nearly three centuries, being finally discovered, about 1835, among some old papers belonging to the corporation of Ipswich, whence it passed into the possession of the Duke of Devonshire. It breathes a most emphatic defiance of the pope and popery, making war upon the relics of the Roman ritual and of church wealth—such as was spared by Henry VIII. The first act opens with a speech from the king, declaring his lineage and title to the throne and announcing his intention to do his duty. Then enters "Ynglond Vidua"—England personified as a widow—who at once begs for protection from her oppressors.

"Who are these?" asks the king. She replies in these vigorous lines, wishing bad luck to the clericals and their allies:

Such lubbers as hath dysgyssed heads in their hoodes,  
Whych in ydlenes do lyve by other menns goodes,  
Monkes, chanons, and nones in dyvers coloure and shappe,  
Both whyght, blacke, and pyed, God send their increase  
yll happe.

But conspirators determine that an interdict shall be issued and the reign of popery fully reëstablished. Thus, in spite of the remonstrances of the king, the nobility, clergy and civil order bend the knee before Langton and Pandulp, while Commynalte, the personification of the people, in whom the monarch has placed his last trust, tremblingly submits to the arrogant cardinal. Hearing that enemies from abroad are threatening him from every side, John at last gives way and delivers up his crown. But even this does not satisfy his enemies, and it is finally determined to make away with him by poison. Dissimulation, one of the conspirators, on being promised eternal bliss as the reward, assumes to himself the responsibility of the deed and its consequences. Entering in the guise of a monk, bearing a cup and singing a wassail song, he drinks of the poisoned draught and offers the remainder to the king, who is athirst. Then the monk goes to his death, comforted by the thought that he dies for the church, and the king also expires, but not on the stage, after forgiving his foes and uttering a farewell to England. The tradition that John was poisoned in a monastery,

though long accepted as true, rests on very doubtful authority.

### Classical Plays.

In the reign of Elizabeth classical plays were much in favor, including the ten dramas of Seneca translated by Jasper Heywood and others, all being collected into a single volume under the title of *Seneca*. Of *Julius Cæsar*, acted before the queen at Whitehall about a month after the performance of *Gorboduc*, nothing is known except the fact of its presentation, although it was probably a reproduction of Grévius' *César*, which appeared in Paris in 1560. Another was *Scipio Africanus*, mentioned by Peele as one of the most popular dramas of the day. Stephen Gosson, himself a dramatist, speaks of *Ptolome* and *Catiline Conspiracies*, "a pig of his own sowe" as "tollerable at sometime." He also refers to *Cæsar and Pompey* and the *Fabii* as the work of contemporary playwrights. Gascoigne's *Jocasta* is a rather free adaptation of the *Phæniissæ* of Euripides, except that the choral odes are chiefly original. It was acted at Gray's Inn in 1566, and was the second English play written in blank verse; for Marlowe had not as yet weaned the people from what he terms

The jiggig veins of rhyming mother-wits.

### Damon and Pythias.

In connection with the above may be mentioned the *Damon and Pythias* of Richard Edwards, of Christ

Church, Oxford and Lincoln's Inn. It is, however, a tragi-comedy rather than a tragedy proper, and of the kind much esteemed in Italy during the sixteenth century. The play was popular for a time, and its author was lauded by his admirers, one of whom calls him "the flower of our realm and phoenix of our age." It is weak in action, language and metre, and the comic business is in the nature of broad farce.

### Adaptations from the Italians.

At this time stories from modern history and romance were also adapted to the stage, especially from Italian novels, the highly-seasoned tales of Boccaccio and other Italian writers stimulating the curiosity and, as Ascham remarks, something worse than the curiosity of Englishmen. France was also introducing the lighter productions of her drama, and these were well received in the English market. The materials for one of Shakespeare's most popular plays was largely taken from Bandello's history of *Romeo and Juliet*, itself preceded by Luigi da Porto's narrative, while both were used before Shakespeare's time for a dramatic version of the story by Arthur Brooke. Yet in none do we find any trace of the genius which the great poet breathed into this popular romance of the middle ages.

### Tancred and Gismunda.

Italian novels, and especially those of Cinthio, were a favorite source of materials for Shakespeare, his con-

temporaries and predecessors; but this, it may here be remarked, is no proof that Shakespeare was acquainted with the Italian language. Translations were plentiful, and the first volume of Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure* contained sixty of Boccaccio's stories. The tragedy of *Tancred and Gismunda*, taken from the *Decameron*, is the oldest English play extant whose plot is borrowed from the Italian. As in *Gorboduc*, the authors attempted to follow ancient models, every act commencing with a dumb show and ending with a chorus. Originally written in rhyme by five members of the Inner Temple, where it was acted in 1568 before Queen Elizabeth and her "right honorable maidens," it was republished in 1572 by Robert Wilmot, "polished according to the decorum of these days"—that is, put into blank verse.

The theme of the tragedy is romantic in the extreme. Tancred, after surprising his daughter, Gismunda, in company with her lover, causes him to be put to death, and his heart is presented to his daughter in a golden cup. She then fills the cup with poison, drinks from it, and her dying wish to be reunited with her lover in the tomb is carried out by her broken-hearted father, who slays himself with his own hands. An interesting feature of the play is the struggle between the classical taste of the authors and the romantic character of the subject. The first four acts proceed smoothly, Cupid pronouncing the prologue, while choruses of maidens intersperse lyric passages with the action, the real incidents of which are carefully kept behind the scenes. But in the last act the situation becomes too strong to be set

forth in classic style, and Gismunda and her father both die on the stage. The speeches are of inordinate length; but the lyrical portions are graceful, and in other respects the play has literary merit. In the second act, instead of at the end, comes the inevitable compliment to Queen Elizabeth:

Yet let not us maidens condemn our kind,  
Because our virtues are not all so rare;  
For we may freshly yet recall in mind,  
There lives a virgin, one without compare,  
Who of all graces hath her heavenly share;  
In whose renown, and for whose happy days,  
Let us record this Pæan of her praise.

### Promos and Cassandra.

In 1578 was printed the *Promos and Cassandra* of George Whetstone, from which Shakespeare took the story of his *Measure for Measure*, both being founded on a novel of Cinthio's, afterward translated into Whetstone's *Heptameron*. In his dedication the author exhibits a very critical spirit, for various reasons condemning the dramatic tastes of European nations, while most severe upon his own: "At this day," he says, "the Italian is so lascivious in his comedies that honest hearers are grieved at his actions. The Frenchman and Spaniard follow the Italian's humor; the German is too holy, for he presents on every common stage what preachers should pronounce in pulpits. The Englishman, in this quality, is most vain, indiscreet and out of order. He first grounds his work on impossibilities; then in three hours runs he through the world, marries,

gets children, makes children men, men to conquer kingdoms, murder monsters, and bringeth Gods from Heaven, and fetcheth devils from hell." His greatest objection to English playwrights is that they do not make the speech of each character appropriate to it, but use one order of speech for all kinds of persons. While taking this lofty ground it cannot be said that Whetstone has practised what he preached. From considerations of decorum, as he states, he condenses his story into two acts, but centres the entire interest in the first one, and to "work kindly" the action of his personages, makes his low comedy very low and his grosser characters very gross. The moral struggles of the heroine are brought to a conclusion too rapidly, and the cumbersome slowness of an offensive plot is only relieved by the intrigues of a courtesan and the ribaldries of a pimp. All these objectionable features are expunged in *Measure for Measure*, albeit one of the weakest of Shakespeare's comedies.

### **Misfortunes of Arthur.**

The *Misfortunes of Arthur*, acted before Elizabeth at Greenwich in 1587, is in some respects one of the most remarkable of early English plays. It is the work of several collaborators belonging to the Society of Gray's Inn, Thomas Hughes writing the body of the drama, Nicholas Trotte the introduction and Francis Flower the choruses of the first and second acts, while three others devised and allegorised the dumb shows with singular ingenuity. Among these three was



"Maister Francis Bacon," already a bencher of Gray's Inn and an ex-member of Parliament. As is shown in his essay on *Masques and Triumphs*, Bacon possessed no little insight into the principles of dramatic effect, and this is one of the claims that have been brought forward for him as the real author of Shakespeare's plays.

The *Misfortunes of Arthur* is taken from the *Morte d' Arthur*, which, says Roger Ascham, "in our forefathers' time" had formed the staple literary entertainment of the English court. But, though the Arthurian legend had furnished the subject of more than one Elizabethan drama, it proved impossible to galvanize into a national subject the unreal figures of this mystic cycle of romance. In the play in question the story of Arthur's fall is viewed as the wreaking of a curse due to the hero's sin, and the ghost of Gorlois, whom in life Uther Pendragon, Arthur's father, had so cruelly wronged, opens the first act as the shade of Tantalus opens the *Thyestes* of Seneca. The expectation of Arthur's return by the guilty Guenerora recalls the opening situation of the *Agamemnon*, and in general the rules of the classic drama are carefully observed. Very spirited is the address of Arthur to his soldiers, in which he bids defiance to his rebel son, and the tragedy ends effectively with the mysterious disappearance of Arthur:

This only now I crave (O fortune erst  
My faithful friend) let it be soon forgot,  
Nor long in mind, nor mouth, where Arthur fell;  
Yea, though I conqueror die, and full of fame,

Yet let my death and parture rest obscure.  
No grave I need (O fates) nor burial rights,  
Nor stately hearse, nor tomb, with haughty top;  
But let my carcase lurk; yea, let my death  
Be aye unknown, so that in every coast  
I still be feared, and looked for every hour.

### Chronicle Histories.

From the double danger which threatened the tragic drama of England in the days of its infancy—that it would congeal on the cold heights of classical themes, or dissolve its vigor in the glowing heat of a passion fiercer than that of the Italians—it was preserved, more than by any other cause, by its happy association with the traditions of the national history. The crude growth of the chronicle history proved strong enough to assert itself by the side of tragedy based on classical and Italian models; and in a series of works of more or less uncertain dates, a vein was opened from which Shakespeare was to draw the richest ore. Among these rude compositions, in which comedy was freely intermixed with tragic elements, are the *Famous Victories of Henry V*, acted before 1588, the *Troublesome Raigne of King John* and the *True Chronicle History of King Leir*. A still further step in advance was taken in what really deserves the title of the *Tragedy of Sir Thomas More*, not so much on account of the relative nearness of the subject to the time of its treatment, as because of the tragic responsibility of character here already worked out.

Written partly in prose and partly in blank verse,

the *Famous Victories* is not even divided into acts and scenes, nor otherwise constructed with the slightest degree of dramatic skill; yet it is not without a certain degree of vigor and freshness, and in many of its situations and characters we recognize the familiar scenes and figures of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Beginning with the end of Henry IV's reign it introduces not only the wild doings of Prince Hal and his merry companions, but also the interview between the prince and his dying father, and the premature seizure of the crown by the former. Then follow in rapid succession the victorious campaign which ends with Agincourt and the marriage of the young king with the princess Katherine, the scene between her and Henry containing many of the best points in Shakespeare's version, without being disfigured by the grossness observable in the latter.

#### Origin of Shakespeare's *King John*.

The *Troublesome Raigne of King John* is in two sections, partly in prose and partly in verse, and not divided into acts, the scenes following each other without any attempt at dramatic construction; nor is there, except perhaps in the bastard Faulconbridge, any attempt to develop character out of the situations. The facts, or supposed facts, of history are allowed to speak for themselves, and it is interesting to compare this elaborate production with the compact drama of Shakespeare, whose work it was once believed to be, chiefly on the authority of Pope. It is one of the best examples

of the chronicle history pure and simple, and the author is at the same time alive to the political lessons of his subject—as he understands them—so far as it relates to the struggle with Rome. In part I the king thus addresses Cardinal Pandulph: “Tell thy master so from me, and say John of England said it, that never an Italian priest of them all shall either have tythe, toll, or polling penny out of England; but as I am king, so will I reign next under God, supreme head both over spiritual and temporal; and he that contradicts me in this, I’ll make him hop headlesse.” Again in part II:

If my dying heart deceive me not,  
From out these loins shall spring a kingly branch,  
Whose arm shall reach unto the gates of Rome,  
And with his feet tread down the strumpet’s pride  
That sits upon the chair of Babylon.

The facts are drily narrated, but in substance are almost identical with those of Shakespeare’s drama, except that the older play introduces, with a mixture of comic ribaldry, an incident omitted by the latter—the plunder of a Franciscan abbey by Faulconbridge.

#### Story of King Lear.

The story of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* is found in the *True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan and Cordella*, first acted in 1593. Its resemblance to Shakespeare’s tragedy is not more striking than its points of difference; for it has none of the powerful bye-plot of Gloucester and his

sons, and in other respects is far from developing the dramatic capabilities of the subject as portrayed under the touch of the great master. Little is made of the effects of Lear's experience and of the growth of his madness, which in the greater work constitutes the climax of terror and pity; nor is the king accompanied in his wanderings by those strangely contrasted companions, Edmund and the fool. While the ingratitude of Regan and Goneril is poorly depicted, and without the cumulating instances of Shakespeare, the uninteresting episode of the wooing of Cordelia by the king of France, who meets her in disguise, is drawn out to a wearisome length. Yet, with all its defects, the play only wanted the manipulation of a powerful hand to be converted into a tragedy of supreme effectiveness, and while Shakespeare's genius nowhere showed itself with greater force and versatility, it nowhere found more promising materials ready at its command.

### *Sir Thomas More.*

The tragedy of *Sir Thomas More* is a play within a play, the first portion belonging to the class of Moralities and the remainder to the historic drama. The anonymous author has, in a measure, overcome the difficulty of his task by treating More's fall as a heaven-sent calamity, which calls rather for sympathy and pity than for judgment on actions and motives. The hero is first exhibited as the wise judge, the energetic politician and the renowned scholar. He deals out equity at the expense of a justice of the peace; he suppresses

a dangerous insurrection, and holds sportive converse with Erasmus, "the famous clarke of Rotherdam." Then, after the moral play is ended, he sits in high Council of State, and it is here that he declines to submit to the king's demand, after which we are introduced to the house at Chelsea, and the domestic circle which Holbein has rendered familiar. More's cheerful and philosophic bearing is very finely depicted, and we then accompany him to the tower and the scaffold, where, says the personage whose speech concludes the play, "A very learned, worthy gentleman seals error with his blood."

The contention between the houses of York and Lancaster, which connects itself so closely with Shakespeare's plays, was treated by at least one of his predecessors, while Richard III had long been a favorite subject, and there are traces of an old historical play on the life and death of Richard I.

### *The Origin of English Comedy.*

Somewhat older than that of tragedy, the germs of comedy were gradually developed, as in Italy and Spain, from the cumbersome Mystery and Morality plays. To effect this transformation, it was first required that some writer should be found bold enough to throw aside the time-honored abstractions and to substitute for them those personal types which had hitherto been only occasionally introduced. There were already in existence interlocutory poems which needed only the element of action to transform them into drama, while the Moral

plays had shown how easily a dramatic fable could be constructed out of a contrast of characters. To find in the exposition of such a contrast, represented by living human types, materials for dramatic action, was to take the requisite step in advance. This was accomplished by John Heywood, who finally bridged the chasm separating the religious from the secular drama.

### John Heywood.

A native of London and educated at Oxford, Heywood was introduced by his friend, Sir Thomas More, to the notice of Henry VIII, his ready wit and musical skill winning the favor of that monarch and of his daughter Mary, both as princess and queen. In the reign of Edward VI, however, he appears to have escaped persecution only as a matter of favor; for he was threatened with "the jerk of the six-stringed whip," though for what offense is not related by his biographers. On the accession of Elizabeth he left his native country and retired to Malines, in Belgium, where he died in 1565, after publishing a collection of his works.

### Heywood's Interludes.

Heywood's interludes, as they were commonly termed, are extremely simple, although their wit and humor would have sufficed for more ambitious compositions, forming a strong contrast to the tedious literature of the Religious drama. He tells his story with true Chaucerian raciness, and in his simple scenes

contrives to introduce sketches of character of singular effectiveness. His fondness for a joke seems merely as a ripple on the broad surface of the common sense which overlays the strong and healthy morality of his plays. Of these interludes only one can here be mentioned, and that in such brief outline as will serve to afford some conception of the piece; for a bare description in the way of comment and criticism will convey to the reader no adequate idea of its merits.

In the *Mery Play Between Johan Johan the Husbonde, Tyb His Wife and Syr John the Preest*, there are no characters except those mentioned in the title, and the plot is simplicity itself. Johan Johan opens the piece with a soliloquy, in which he announces with heroic boldness his determination to exercise marital authority by "beating his wife." He reviews and overcomes the possible arguments against such a proceeding; but the real argument soon appears in the form of Tyb herself. She meets her husband's suspicions as to her relations with the parish priest by compelling him to ask her friend to partake of a "pye," and it is this which constitutes the central point of interest. It is bad enough, thinks Johan, to suffer injury, but to be deprived of his dinner by the destroyer of his peace is more than he can endure, this scene being worked out with all the robust humor of which Heywood was capable. While the priest and Tyb are making an end of the pie, Johan is made to chafe wax at the fire, to stop a hole in a pail made by his wife. In the end his patience gives way, and he attacks the priest "with his fyst," ending the play with forebodings that his wife



has found means of consoling Syr John, to which it behooves him as her husband at once to put a stop.

### First English Comedies.

Isolated Latin comedies had been produced in the original or in English versions or reproductions as early as the reign of Henry VIII, and the Morality and its descendant, the Interlude, pointed the way toward nationalizing and popularizing types equally fitted to divert Italian and English audiences. Thus the earliest extant English comedy, N. Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*, which cannot be dated later than 1551, may be described as a genuinely English adaptation of Plautus, while its successor, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, printed in 1575, and probably written by Bishop Still, has an original, and in consequence a slighter, though by no means unamusing, plot. In the main, however, early English comedy, while occasionally introducing characters of native origin, and appealing to the traditional humors of Will Summer, the court-fool of Henry VIII, or Grim, the collier of Croydon, was content to borrow its themes from Italian or classical sources; Ariosto's *I Suppositi* found a translator in Gascoigne, and the *Menæchmi* of Plautus translators or imitators in writers of rather later dates. While on the one hand the mixture of tragic with comic motives was already leading in the direction of tragi-comedy, the precedent of the Italian pastoral drama encouraged the introduction of figures and stories from classical mythology; and the rapid and versatile influence of Italian comedy

seemed likely to continue to control the progress of the lighter branch of the English drama.

### **The Elizabethan Age.**

Out of such promises as these the glories of the English drama were ripened by the warmth and light of the great Elizabethan age, of which the beginnings may fairly be reckoned from the third decennium of the reign to which it owes its name. The queen's love of dramatic entertainments could not of itself have led, though it undoubtedly contributed, to such a result. Against the attacks which a nascent puritanism was already directing against the stage by the hands of Northbrooke, the repentant playwright Gosson, Stubbes and others were to be set not only the barren favor of royalty, and the more direct patronage of great nobles, but the fact that literary authorities were already weighing the endeavors of the English drama in the balance of respectful criticism, and that in the abstract at least the claims of both tragedy and comedy were upheld by those who shrunk from the desipience of idle pastimes. As the popularity of the stage increased, the functions of playwright and actor, whether combined or not, began to hold out a reasonable promise of personal gain. Nor, above all, was that higher impulse which leads men of talent and genius to attempt forms of art in harmony with the tastes and tendencies of their times wanting to the group of writers who can be remembered by no nobler name than that of Shakespeare's predecessors.

The lives of all these are in part contemporary with the life of Shakespeare himself, nor was there any substantial difference in the circumstances under which most of them lived as dramatic authors. A distinction was clearly maintained between poets and playwrights; but of the contempt entertained for the actor's profession some fell to the share of the dramatist. "Even Lodge," says Dr. Ingleby, "who had indeed never trod the stage, but had written several plays, and had no reason to be ashamed of his antecedents, speaks of the vocation of the play-maker as sharing the odium attaching to the actor." Among the dramatists themselves good-fellowship and literary companionship only at times asserted themselves as stronger than the tendency to mutual jealousy and abuse; of all chapters of dramatic history the annals of the early Elizabethan stage, perhaps, least resemble those of Arcadia.

### *Two Theatrical Companies.*

Moreover, the theatre had hardly found its strength as a powerful element in the national life when it was involved in a bitter dispute with which it had originally no connection. The Marprelate controversy in 1589 led to a stoppage of stage plays which proved only temporary, but the general result of the attempt to make the theatre a vehicle of political abuse and invective was beyond a doubt to coarsen and degrade both plays and players. The true remedy was at last applied when, from about the year 1594, the chief London actors became divided into two great rival

companies—the Lord Chamberlain's and the Lord Admiral's—which alone received licenses. Instead of half a dozen or more companies whose jealousies communicated themselves to the playwrights belonging to them, there were now, besides the Children of the Chapel, two established bodies of actors, directed by steady and, in the full sense of the word, respectable men. To the Lord Chamberlain's company, which, after being settled at "the Theatre," moved to the Globe on the Bankside in 1599, belonged Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, the latter the greatest of the Elizabethan actors; the Lord Admiral's was managed by Philip Henslowe, the author of the *Diary*, and Edward Alleyn, the founder of Dulwich College, and was ultimately, in 1600, established at the Fortune. In these and other houses were performed the plays of Elizabethan dramatists, with few adventitious aids, the performance being crowded into a brief afternoon, when only the leisured classes of the population could attend. No woman might appear at a playhouse unless masked; on the stage, down to the Restoration, women's parts continued to be acted by boys.

## II.

### The Early Elizabethan Drama.

The plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries richly repay the student of the development of dramatic writing, and not less so the reader for pleasure. If from our point of view they are crude in various ways, there is no lack of power and nobility. The "mighty line" of Marlowe alone gave fine distinction to the work of that band of young enthusiasts whose ideals were fixed so high that their very failures have a glory unattained by many of their luckier imitators whose writings have hit popular favor.

A few of these pioneers rank close around their great master, but it is not necessary to dwell at great length upon their work. Elsewhere in this volume will be described the *Tamburlaine* of Marlowe, and Webster's *Duchess of Malfy*, two of the most powerful productions of this period.

Fire, fanaticism and neglect have deprived us of many of the historical plays in existence in Shakespeare's time. Nearly all the gaps in English annals left in the chronicles of Shakespeare were filled in by his contemporaries, by Peele, Marlowe, Heywood,

Fletcher and Ford, thus placing before us a series of dramas representing the chief incidents of three of the most eventful centuries in English history. Yet at least one-half of them are unknown to the modern stage, while many have not been produced since the time of the Stuarts. In truth, most of them could not be reproduced in the form in which they were written, for the continual shifting of scenes alone would prove too severe a strain on the patience of the audience and the resources of the manager. In Shakespeare's time it was no very difficult matter to divide a play into thirty scenes, when the shifting was done by suggestion, and the scenery sketched in a glow of words by the poet. To the onlooker there was no absurdity in a long rhetorical parley between a general in camp and the enemy on the lofty walls of a besieged city. Nor was there any hesitation in fighting battles before spectators whose criticism was disarmed in advance by a pleading apology for shortcomings, and upon whose imagination a burden was adroitly cast that in our languid age would be scornfully discarded. Shakespeare himself makes the appeal—

Pardon, gentles all —— O pardon! —— let us  
On your imaginary forces work;  
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;  
Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
And make imaginary puissance;  
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;  
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.

And again, in the well-known lines—

O for pity! we shall much disgrace  
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,  
Right ill-disposed in brawl ridiculous,  
The name of Agincourt.

But to-day, when realism rules the drama, the best of plays will have no hearing unless the stage is filled with pictures closely resembling nature, and the scene-painter shares with the actor and author the plaudits of the audience. Of recent years experiments have been made in reviving a few pieces with the simple setting which sufficed in their day, but the qualified success attained was due rather to antiquarian than to dramatic features.

The selections which follow are from the striking play of *Edward I*, by George Peele. They are strung together as fragments of an incomplete work, and besides their poetical merits they are interesting as belonging to the earliest group of historical dramas.

The scene—II of Act I—is on the coast of Wales, and the entering characters are Welshmen, Lluellen, Rice ap Meredith and Owen ap Rice.

*Lluellen*.—Come, Rice, and rouse thee for thy country's good:

Follow the man that means to make you great;  
Follow, Lluellen, rightful Prince of Wales,  
Sprung from the loins of great Cadwallader,  
Descended from the line of Trojan Brute.  
And though the traitorous Saxons, Normans, Danes,  
Have pent the true remains of glorious Troy  
Within the western mountains of this isle,  
Yet have we hope to climb these stony pales,  
When Londoners, as Romans erst, amazed  
Shall trembling cry, "Lluellen's at the gate!"

To accomplish this, thus have I brought you forth  
 Disguised to Milford-Haven: here attend  
 The landing of the lady Elinor.  
 Her stay doth make me muse; the wind stands fair,  
 And ten days hence we did expect them here.  
 Neptune! be favorable to my love,  
 And steer her keel with thy three-forkéd mace,  
 That from this shore I may behold her sails,  
 And in mine arms embrace my dearest dear.

*Rice ap Mer.*—Brave Prince of Wales, this honorable match  
 Cannot but turn to Cambria's common good.  
 Simon de Montfort, her thrice-valiant son,  
 That in the Barons' wars was general,  
 Was loved and honored of the Englishmen:  
 When they shall hear she's your espoused wife,  
 Assure your grace we shall have great supply  
 To make our roads in England mightily.

*Owen ap Rice.*—What we resolved must strongly be performed  
 Before the king returns from Palestine.  
 Whilst he wins glory at Jerusalem,  
 Let us win ground upon the Englishmen.

*Llu.*—Owen ap Rice, 'tis that Lluellen fears:  
 I fear me Edward will be come ashore  
 Ere we can make provision for the war.  
 But be it as it will, within his court  
 My brother David is, that bears a face  
 As if he were my greatest enemy.  
 He by this craft shall creep into his heart,  
 And give intelligence from time to time  
 Of his intentions, drifts, and stratagems.  
 Here let us rest upon the salt seashore,  
 And while our eyes long for our hearts' desires,  
 Let us, like friends, pastime us on the sands.  
 Our frolic minds are ominous for good.

Enter Guenther with letters.

*Lluellen.*—What tidings bringeth Guenther with his haste?  
 Say, man, what bodes thy message, good or bad?



*Guenther.*—Bad, my lord; and all in vain, I wot,  
 Thou dart'st thine eyes upon the wallowing main,  
 As erst did Ægeus to behold his son,  
 To welcome and receive thy welcome love;  
 And sable sails he saw, and so may'st thou,  
 For whose mishap the brackish seas lament.  
 Edward, O Edward!

*Llu.*—And what of him?

*Guen.*—Landed he is at Dover with his men,  
 From Palestine safe; by his English lords  
 Received in triumph, like an earthly god;  
 He lives to wear his father's diadem,  
 And sway the sword of British Albion.  
 But Elinor, thy Elinor!

*Llu.*—What of her?

Hath amorous Neptune gazed upon my love,  
 And stopt her passage with his forkéd mace?  
 Or, that I rather fear—— O deadly fear!——  
 Doth Nereus withhold my Elinor?

*Guen.*—Nor Nereus, Neptune, nor other god  
 Withholdeth from my gracious lord his love:  
 But cruel Edward, that injurious king,  
 Withholds thy liefest lovely Elinor,  
 Ta'en in a pinnace on the narrow seas  
 By four tall ships of Bristow, and with her  
 Lord Emerick, her unhappy noble brother,  
 As from Montargis hitherward they sailed  
 This say in brief these letters tell at large.

(*Lluellen* reads.)

*Llu.*—Is Longshanks, then, so lusty now become?  
 Is my fair love, my beauteous Elinor, ta'en?  
 Villains, damn'd villains, not to guard her safe,  
 Or fence her sacred person from her foes!  
 But if kind Cambria deign me good aspéct,  
 To make me chiefest Brute of western Wales,  
 I'll short that gain-legg'd Longshanks by the top,  
 And make his flesh my murdering falchion's food.  
 To arms, true Britons, sprung of Trojans' seed,  
 And with your swords write in the Book of Time

Your British names in characters of blood!  
 Owen ap Rice, while we stay for further force,  
 Prepare, away in post, and take with thee  
 A hundred chosen of thy countrymen,  
 And scour the marches with your Welshmen's hooks,  
 That Englishmen may think the devil has come.  
 Rice shall remain with me; make thou thy bode  
 In resolution to revenge these wrongs  
 With blood of thousands guiltless of this rage.  
 Fly thou on them amain!— Edward, my love  
 Be thy life's bane!— Follow me, countrymen!  
 Words make no way: my Elinor is surprised;  
 Robbed am I of the comforts of my life;  
 And know I this, and am not venged on him. (Exeunt.)

In the first scene of Act II Lluellen, Sir David and Rice of Meredith meet outside Carnarvon Castle.

*Sir David.*—Soft! is it not Meredith I behold?

*Lluellen.*—All good, all friends. Meredith, see the man  
 Must make us great, and raise Lluellen's head:  
 Fight thou, Lluellen, for thy friend and thee.

*Rice ap Mer.*—Fight, maugre fortune strong, our battle's strong,  
 And bear thy foes before thy pointed lance.

*Sir D.*—Not too much prowess, good my lord, at once.  
 Some talk of policy another while.

*Llu.*—David, if thou wilt best for me devise,  
 Advise my love be rendered to my hand.  
 Tell them the chains that Mulciber erst made  
 To tie Prometheus' limbs to Caucasus,  
 Nor Furies' fangs shall hold me long from her,  
 But I will have her from th' usurper's tent,  
 My beauteous Elinor! If aught in this,  
 If in this case thy wit may boot thy friends,  
 Express it, then, in this, in nothing else.

*Sir D.*—Ay, there's a card that puts us to our trump;  
 For might I see the star of Leicester's loins,  
 It were enough to darken and obscure

This Edward's glory fortune, and his pride.  
First, hereof can I put you out of doubt:  
Lord Mortimer of the king hath her in charge,  
And honorably entreats your Elinor.  
Some think he prays Lluellen were in heaven,  
And thereby hopes to couch his love on earth.

*Llu.*—No: where Lluellen mounts, there Ellen flies.  
Unspeakable are my thoughts of her:  
She's not from me in death to be divorced.  
Go to, it shall be so; so shall it be.  
Edward is full resolvéd of thy faith,  
So are the English lords, and barons all:  
Then what may let thee to intrude on them  
Some new-found stratagem to feel their wit?

*Sir D.*—It is enough. Meredith, take my weapons;  
I am your prisoner; say so at the least.  
Go hence, and when you parle on the walls,  
Make show of monstrous tyranny you intend  
To execute on me, as on the man  
That shamefully rebels 'gainst kin and kind;  
And 'less thou have thy love, and make thy peace  
With such conditions as shall best concern,  
David must die, say thou, a shameful death.  
Edward, perhaps, with ruth and pity mov'd,  
Will in exchange yield Elinor to thee,  
And thou by me shalt gain thy heart's desire.

*Llu.*—Sweetly advis'd: David, thou blessest me,  
My brother David, lengthener of my life!—  
Friends, gratulate to me my joyful hopes. (Exeunt.)

Enter King Edward, Sussex, Mortimer, and others.

*Edward.*—Why, barons, suffer ye our foes to breathe?  
Assault, assault, and charge them all amain!  
They fear, they fly, they faint, they fight in vain.  
But where is gentle David? in his den?  
Loth were I aught but good should him betide.

(An alarm sounds. Enter, on the walls, Lluellen and soldiers.)

Where is the proud disturber of our state,  
Traitor to Wales and to his sovereign?

*Lluellen*.—Usurper, here I am. What dost thou crave?

*Edw.*—Welshman, allegiance, which thou ow'st thy king!

*Llu.*—Traitor, no king, that seeks thy country sack,  
The famous runagate of Christendom.

*Edw.*—Ambitious rebel, know'st thou what I am,  
How great, how famous, and how fortunate?  
And dar'st thou carry arms against me here,  
Even when thou should'st do reverence at my feet?  
Yea, feared and honored in the farthest parts  
Hath Edward been, the noble Henry's son.  
Traitor, this sword unsheathed hath shined oft  
With reeking in the blood of Saracens.  
Sitting before the gates of Nazareth,  
My horse's hoofs I stained in pagan's gore,  
Sending whole centuries of heathen souls  
To Pluto's house: this sword, this thirsty sword,  
Aims at thy head, and shall, I hope, ere long,  
Gage and divide thy bowels and thy bulk,  
Disloyal villain, thou, and what is more?

*Llu.*—Why, thinkest thou I will be scared with words?  
No: didst thou speak in thunder like to Jove,  
Or should'st thou as Briareus, shake at once  
A hundred bloody swords with bloody hands,  
I tell thee, Longshanks, here he faceth thee  
Whom naught can daunt, no, not the stroke of death.  
Resolv'd ye see: but see the chance of war:

(Enter David, guarded.)

Know'st thou a traitor if thou seest his head?  
Then, Longshanks, look this villain in the face:  
This rebel, he hath wrought his country's wreck;  
Base rascal, bad and hated in his kind,  
Object of wrath, and subject of revenge.

*Edw.*—Lluellen, call'st thou this the chance of war?  
Bad for us all, perdy, but worse for him.—  
Courage, Sir David! kings thou know'st must die,  
And noble minds all dastard fear defy.

*Sir David.*—Renowned Edward, star of England's globe,  
My liefest lord and sweetest sovereign,  
Glorious and happy is this chance to me,

To reap this fame and honor in my death,—  
 That I was hewed with foul-defiléd hands  
 For my belovéd king and country's good,  
 And died in grace and favor with my prince.—  
 Seize on me, bloody butchers, with your paws:  
 It is but temporal that you can inflict.

*Edw.*—Bravely resolv'd, brave soldier, by my life!

*Mortimer.*—Lluellen, in the midst of all thy braves,  
 How wilt thou use thy brother thou hast ta'en?  
 Wilt thou not let his master ransom him?

*Llu.*—No, nor his mistress, gallant Mortimer,  
 With all the gold and silver of the land.

*Rice ap Mer.*—Ransom this Judas to his father's line!  
 Ransom this traitor to his brother's life!  
 No. Take that earnest—penny of thy death.—  
 (Seems to stab Sir David.)

This touch, my lord, comes nothing near the mark.

*Edw.*—O villain, hold thy hands! but ask and have.

*Llu.*—We will not ask nor have. Seest thou these tools?  
 (Shows hot pincers.)

These be the dogs shall bait him to the death,  
 And shall by piece-meal tear his curséd flesh;  
 And in thy sight here shall he hang and pine.

*Edw.*—O villains, traitors, how will I be venged!

*Llu.*—What, threat'st thou, Edward? Desperate minds con-  
 temn

That fury menaceth: see thy words' effects.

(Seems to cut Sir David.)

*Sir D.*—O gracious heavens, dissolve me into clay!

This tyranny is more than flesh can bear.

*Edw.*—Bear it, brave mind, sith nothing but thy blood  
 May satisfy in this extreme estate.

*Sussex.*—My lord, it is in vain to threaten them;

They are resolved, ye see, upon his death.

*Edw.*—Sussex, his death, they all shall buy it dear:

Offer them any favor for his life,  
 Pardon, or peace, or aught what is beside:  
 So love me God as I regard my friends!—

Lluellen, let me have thy brother's life  
Even at what rate and ransom thou wilt name.

*Llu.*—Edward, King Edward, as thou list be term'd,  
Thou know'st thou hast my beauteous Elinor:  
Produce her forth to prove for David's life;  
She may obtain more than a host of men.

*Edw.*—Wilt thou exchange thy prisoner for thy love?

*Llu.*—Talk no more to me; let me see her face.

*Mort.*—Why will your majesty be all so base  
To stoop to his demands in everything?

*Edw.*—Fetch her at once; good Mortimer, be gone.

(Exit Mortimer.)

*Rice ap Mer.*—Apace, Mortimer, if thou love thy friend.

*Edw.*—See, Sussex, how he bleedeth in my eye,  
That beareth fortune's shock triumphantly.

*Rice ap Mer.*—News, my lord, a star from out the sea;  
The sun is risen and made a summer's day.

(Reënter Mortimer, conducting the Lady Elinor.)

*Llu.*—What, Nell, sweet Nell, do I behold thy face?  
Fall heavens, fleet stars, shine Phœbus' lamp no more!  
This is the planet lends this world her light;  
Star of my fortune this, that shineth bright,  
Queen of my heart, loadstar of my delight,  
Fair mould of beauty, miracle of fame.  
O, let me die with Elinor in mine arms!

*Edw.*—Good cheer, Sir David; we shall up anon.

*Elinor.*—Sweet Prince of Wales, were I within thine arms,  
O then should I in peace possess my love,  
And heavens open fair their crystal gates,  
That I may see the palace of my intent.

*Edw.*—Lluellen, set thy brother David free:  
Let me have him, thou shalt have Elinor.

*Llu.*—Sooth, Edward, I do prize my Elinor  
Dearer than life; but there belongeth more  
To these affairs than my content in love:  
And to be short, if thou wilt have thy man,  
Of whom, I swear, thou thinkest over-well,  
The safety of Lluellen and his men

Must be regarded highly in this match.

Say, therefore, and be short, wilt thou give peace  
And pardon to Lluellen and his men?

*Edw.*—I will herein have time to be advis'd.

*Llu.*—The gates are open'd; enter thee and thine.

*Sir D.*—The sweetest sun that e'er I saw to shine!

*Edw.*—Madam, a braddle well begun for thee:

Be thou my guest and Sir Lluellen's love. (Exeunt).

The second scene is on a road in Wales, and the personages are Queen Elinor and Joan in a litter, the Earl of Gloucester and attendants.

*Queen Elinor.*—Fie, this hot weather, how it makes me sweat!

Heigh-ho, my heart! ah, I am passing faint!

Give me my fan, that I may cool my face.

Hold, take my mask, but see you rumple't not.

This wind and dust, see how it smolders me!

Some drink, good Gloucester, or I die for thirst.

Ah, Ned, thou hast forgot thy Nell I see,

That she is thus enforced to follow thee!

*Gloucester.*—This air's distemperature, your Majesty,

Noisome through mountain vapors and thick mist,

Unpleasant must be to your company

And you, that ne'er were wont to take the air

Till Flora had perfumed the earth with sweets,

With lilies, roses, mints, and eglantine.

*Q. Elinor.*—I tell thee, earl, the ground is all too base

For Elinor to honor with her steps;

Whose footpace, when she progressed in the streets

Of Akon and the fair Jerusalem,

Was upon naught but costly arras-points,

Fair island-tapestry, and azured silk;

My milk-white steed treading on cloth of ray,

And trampling proudly underneath the feet

Choice of our English woolen drapery.

*Glo.*—This climate lowering with congealéd clouds

That take their swelling from the marish soil,  
 Fraught with infectious fogs and misty damps,  
 Is far unworthy to be once embalmed  
 With redolence of thy refreshing breath,  
 That sweetens where it lights, as do the flames  
 And holy fires of Vesta's sacrifice.

*Joan.*—Those pleasant fields, new-planted with the spring  
 Make Thamesis to mount above the banks,  
 And, like a wanton, wallow up and down.  
 On Flora's beds and Napæ's silver down.

*Glo.*—Ah, Wales for me, madam, while you are here;  
 No climate good unless your grace be near.  
 Would Wales had aught could please you half so well,  
 Or any precious thing in Gloucester's gift,  
 Whereof your ladyship would challenge me!

*Joan.*—Well said, my lord! 'tis as my mother says;  
 You men have learned to woo a thousand ways.

*Glo.*—Or, madam, had I learnt, against my need,  
 Of all those ways to woo, one way to speed,  
 My cunning, then, had been my fortune's guide.

*Q. Elinor.*—Faith, Joan, I think thou must be Gloucester's  
 bride——

Good earl, how near he steps upon her side!  
 I'll tell thee, girl, when I was fair and young,  
 I found such honey in sweet Edward's tongue,  
 As I could never spend one idle walk  
 But Ned and I would piece it out with talk.—  
 So you, my lord, when you have got your Joan,  
 No matter, let queen-mother be alone.  
 Woo on, kind Clare, good Gloucester, love thy Joan:  
 Her heart is thine, her eye is not her own.

*Glo.*—This comfort, madam, that your grace doth give  
 Binds me in double duty whilst I live.  
 Would God, King Edward see and say no less!

*Q. Elinor.*—Gloucester, I warrant thee upon my life  
 My king vouchsafes his daughter for thy wife.  
 Sweet Ned hath not forgot, since he did woo,  
 The gall of love and all that 'longs thereto.



*Glo.*—Why, was your grace so coy to one so kind?

*Q. Elinor.*—Kind, say you, Gloucester! so, methinks, indeed:

It seems he loves his wife no more than needs,  
That sends for us in all this speedy haste,  
Knowing his queen to be so great with child,  
And makes me leave my princely pleasant seats  
To come into his ruder part of Wales.

*Glo.*—His highness hath some secret reason why  
He wishes you to move from England's court.  
The Welshmen have of long time suitors been,  
That when the war of rebels sorts an end,  
None might be prince and ruler over them.  
But such a one as was their countryman;  
Which suit, I think, his grace hath granted them.

*Q. Elinor.*—So, then, it is King Edward's policy  
To have his son—forsooth, son if it be——  
A Welshman: well, Welshman it liketh me. (Exeunt.)

The third scene opens with the entry of King Edward and the Nine Lords of Scotland into Hallin Castle at Berwick. The king makes an announcement:

*Edward.*— Baliol, stand farthest forth:  
Baliol, behold, I give the Scottish crown  
To thee: wear it with hearty thankfulness.  
Sound trumpets, sound, and say all after me,  
God save King Baliol, the Scottish king!  
(Trumpets.)

*All.*—God save King Baliol, the Scottish king!

*Edw.*—Thus, lords, though you require no reason why,  
According to the conscience in the cause,  
I make John Baliol your anointed king.  
Honor and love him, as behooves him best  
That is in peace of Scotland's crown possess'd.

*Baliol.*—Thanks, royal England, for thy honor done.  
This justice that hath calm'd our civil strife,  
Shall now be sealed with honorable love.  
So moved of remorse and piety,

We will erect a college of my name;  
 In Oxford will I build, for memory  
 Of Baliol's bounty and his gratitude;  
 And let me happy days no longer see  
 Than here to England loyal I shall be.

Act III discovers King Baliol and his train at Berwick Castle.

*Baliol*.—Lords of Albania, and my peers in France.  
 Since Baliol is invested in his rights,  
 And wears the royal Scottish diadem,  
 Time is to rouse him, that the world may wot  
 Scotland disdains to carry England's yoke.  
 Therefore, my friends, thus put in readiness,  
 Why slack we time to greet the English king  
 With resolute message, to let him know our minds?  
 Lord Versses, though thy faith and oath be ta'en  
 To follow Baliol's arms for Scotland's right,  
 Yet is thy heart to England's honor knit:  
 Therefore, in spite of England and thyself,  
 Bear thou defiance proudly to thy king;  
 Tell him, Albania finds heart and hope  
 To shake off England's tyranny betime,  
 To rescue Scotland's honor with her sword.  
 Lord Bruce, see cast about Lord Versses' neck  
 A strangling halter, that he mind his haste.  
 How say'st thou, Versses, wilt thou do this message?

*Versses*.—Although no common post, yet, for my king,  
 I will to England, maugre England's might,  
 And do my errand boldly, as becomes;  
 Albeit I honor English Edward's name,  
 And hold these slavish contemnments to scorn.

The second scene is in Carnarvon Castle, where Queen Elinor is seated with Joan, Gloucester and a nurse with the baby Prince of Wales.

(Enter King Edward and Lancaster.)

*Edward*.—How doth my Nell, mine own, my love, my wife,  
My heart, my dear, my dove, my queen, my wife?

*Queen Elinor*.—Ned, art thou come, sweet Ned? welcome, my  
joy!

Thy Nell presents thee with a lovely boy.

Whom do I see? my lord of Lancaster!

Welcome most heartily.

*Lancaster*.—

I thank your grace.

*Edw*.—But tell me now, lappéd in lily bands,

How with my queen, my lovely one, it stands.

*Q. Elinor*.—Sick, mine own Ned, sick for thy company;

That lur'd her with thy love-lies all so fair,

To follow thee unwieldy in thy war.

But I forgive thee, Ned, my life's delight,

So thy young son thou see be bravely dight,

And in Carnarvon christened royally.

Sweet love, let him be lapped most curiously:

He is thine own, as true as he is mine;

Take order, then, that he be passing fine.

*Edw*.—My, lovely lady, let that care be less:

For my young son the country will I feast,

And have him borne as bravely to the font

As ever yet king's son to christening went.

Lack thou no precious thing to comfort thee,

Dearer than England's diadem unto me.

*Q. Elinor*.—Gramercy, Ned! Now, well remembered yet;

I have a suit but you must not deny it.—

Where is my lord of Gloucester, Clare, my guide?—

Good Ned, let Joan of Akon be his bride;

Assure yourself that they are thoroughly woo'd.

*Gloucester*.—(Aside.) God send the king be taken in the mood!

*Edw*.—Then, niece, 'tis like that you shall have a husband.

Come hither, Gloucester; hold, give her thy hand;

Take her, sole daughter to the queen of England.

(Gives Joan to Gloucester.)

For news he brought, Nell, of my young son,

I promis'd him as much as I have done.

*Glo.*—We humbly thank you.

*Lan.*— Joy may them betide,  
A gallant bridegroom and a princely bride!

*Edw.*—Now say, sweet queen, what doth my lady crave?  
Tell me what name shall this young Welshman have,  
Born Prince of Wales by Cambria's full consent?

*Q. Elinor.*—Edward, the name that doth me well content.

*Edw.*—Then Edward of Carnarvon shall he be,  
And Prince of Wales, christened in royalty.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Enter Versses.)

What tidings brings Lord Versses to our court?

*Versses.*—Tidings to make thee tremble, English king.

*Edward.*—Me tremble, boy! must not be news from Scotland  
Can once make English Edward stand aghast.

*Ver.*—Baliol hath chosen at this time to stir;  
To rouse him lion-like, and cast the yoke  
That Scots ingloriously have borne from thee  
And all the predecessors of thy line;  
And makes his roads to reobtain his right,  
And for his homage sends thee all despite.

*Lancaster.*—Why, how now, princex! prat'st thou to a king?

*Ver.*—I do my message truly from my king:  
This sword and target chide in louder terms.  
I bring defiance from king Baliol  
To English Edward and his barons all.

*Edw.*—Marry, methinks so, thou defiest me!

*Ver.*—Baliol, my king, in Berwick makes his court:  
His camp he spreads upon the sandy plain,  
And dares thee to the battle in his right.

*Lan.*—What, court and camp in Englishmen's despite?

*Edw.*—Hold, messenger: commend me to thy king:  
Wear thou my chain, and carry this to him.  
Greet all his rout of rebels more or less;  
Tell them such shameful end will hit them all;  
And wend with this as resolutely back  
As thou to England brought'st thy Scottish braves.

Disdainfully, tell Baliol from us,  
We'll rouse him from his hold, and make him soon  
Dislodge his camp and take his walléd town.  
Say what I bid thee, Versses, to his teeth,  
And earn this favor and a better thing.

*Ver.*—Yes, King of England, whom my heart beloves;  
Think, as I promis'd him to brave thee here,  
So shall I bid John Baliol 'base from thee. (Exit.)

*Edu.*—Why, now is mighty England's harvest ripe:  
Barons, now may we reap the rich renown  
That under warlike colors springs in field,  
And grows where ensigns waved upon the plains.  
False Baliol, Berwick is no hold of proof  
To shroud thee from the strength of Edward's arm:  
No, Scot; thy treason's fear shall make the breach  
For England's pure renown to enter in.

*All.*—Amain, amain, upon these treacherous Scots!  
Amain, say all, upon these treacherous Scots!

*Edu.*—While we with Edmund, Gloucester, and the rest,  
With speedy journeys gather up our forces,  
And beat these braving Scots from England's bounds,  
Mortimer, thou shalt take the rout in task  
That revel here and spoil fair Cambria.  
My queen, when she is strong and well a-foot,  
Shall post to London and repose her there.  
Then God shall send us haply all to meet,  
And joy the honors of our victories.  
Baliol, I come—proud Baliol and ingrate—  
Prepar'd to chase thy men from England's gate!  
(Exeunt.)

The fourth act opens on a battlefield near Shrewsbury.

(Enter Mortimer, with soldiers, pursuing the rebels.)

*Mortimer.*—Strike up the drum! follow, pursue, and chase!  
Follow, pursue, spare not the proudest head  
That havocks England's sacred royalty! (Exeunt.)

(Enter Lluellen, running.)

*Lluellen*.—The angry heavens frown on Britain's face  
To eclipse the glory of fair Cambria:  
With sore aspects the dreadful planets lower.  
Lluellen, basely turn thy back and fly?  
No, Welshmen fight it to the last and die;  
For if my men safely have got the bride,  
Careless of chance I'll reck no sour event.  
England's broad womb hath not that armed band  
That can expel Lluellen from his land.

(Enter Sir David, running.)

*Sir David*.—Fly, Lord of Cambria! fly, Prince of Wales!  
Sweet brother, fly! the field is won and lost:  
Thou art beset with England's furious troops,  
And cursed Mortimer, like a lion, leads.  
Our men have got the bride, but all in vain:  
The Englishmen are come upon our backs.  
Either flee or die, for Edward hath the day.  
For me, I have my rescue in my hand:  
England on me no torments shall inflict.  
Farewell, Lluellen, till we meet in heaven. (Exit.)

(Enter soldiers.)

*First Soldier*.—Follow, pursue! Lie there, whate'er thou be.  
(Slays Lluellen.)

Yet soft, my hearts! let us his countenance see.  
This is the prince; I know him by his face:  
O gracious fortune, that me happy made  
To spoil the weed that chokes fair Cambria!  
Hale him from hence, and in this bosky wood  
Bury his corpse; but for his head, I vow  
I will present our governor with the same. (Exeunt.)

(Enter Mortimer with soldiers, and Sir David, prisoner.)

*Mortimer*.—Bind fast the traitor and bring him away,  
Come on: for those that have submission made,

Their pardons, in the king's name, I pronounce;  
So God save King Edward!

All.—

God save the king!

(*Exeunt.*)

The last scene is in Berwick Castle.

(*Enter King Edward and his lords, with Baliol prisoner.*)

*Edward.*—Now, trothless king, what fruits have braving  
boasts?

What end hath treason but a sudden fall?  
Such as have known thy life and bringing up,  
Have praised thee for thy learning and thy art:  
How comes it, then, that thou forget'st thy books  
That schooled thee to forget ingratitude?  
Unkind! This hand hath 'nointed thee a king;  
This tongue pronounced the sentence of thy ruth:  
If thou, in lieu of mine unfeignéd love,  
Hast levied arms for to attempt my crown,  
Now see the fruits: thy glories are dispersed  
And heifer-like, sith thou hast passed thy bounds,  
Thy sturdy neck must stoop to bear this yoke.

*Baliol.*—I took this lesson, Edward, from my book,  
To keep a just equality of mind,  
Content with every fortune as it comes:  
So can'st thou threat no more than I expect.

*Edw.*—So, sir; your moderation is enforced;  
Your goodly glosses cannot make it good.

*Bal.*—Then will I keep in silence what I mean,  
Since Edward thinks my meaning is not good.

*Edw.*—Nay, Baliol, speak forth, if there yet remain  
A little remnant of persuading art.

*Bal.*—If cunning may have power to win the king,  
Let those employ it that can flatter him;  
If honor'd deed may reconcile the king,  
It lies in me to give and him to take.

*Edw.*—Why, what remains for Baliol now to give?

*Bal.*—Allegiance, as becomes a royal king.

*Edw.*—What league of faith where league is broken once?

*Bal.*—The greater hope in them that once have fallen.

*Edw.*—But foolish are those monarchs that do yield  
A conquered realm upon submissive vows.

*Bal.*—There, take my crown, and so redeem my life.

*Edw.*—Ay, sir; that was the choicest plea of both;  
For whoso quells the pomp of haughty minds,  
And breaks their staff whereon they build their trust,  
Is sure in wanting power they cannot harm.  
Baliol shall live; but yet within such bounds  
That, if his wings grow flig, they may be clipt.

(Enter a messenger.)

*Messenger.*—Honor and fortune wait upon the crown  
Of princely Edward, England's valiant king!

*Edward.*—Thanks, messenger; and if my God vouchsafe  
That wingéd Honor wait upon my throne,  
I'll make her spread her plumes upon their heads  
Whose true allegiance doth confirm the crown.  
What news in Wales? how wends our business there?

*Mes.*—The false disturber of that wasted soil,  
With his adherents, is surpris'd, my king,  
And in assurance he shall start no more;  
Breathless he lies, and headless, too, my lord.  
The circumstance these lines shall here unfold.

(Gives letter.)

*Edw.*—A harmful weed, by wisdom rooted out,  
Can never hurt the true engrafted plant.  
Hie thee back, messenger, to Shrewsbury,  
Bid Mortimer, thy master, speed him fast,  
And with his fortune welcome us to London.  
I long to see my beauteous lovely queen.

There is the true dramatic ring in Peele's work, and gleams of genuine poetry. To modern ears much of the declamation is overdone, yet it stirs our pulses and is not out of harmony with the temper and the deeds



of the characters portrayed. Shakespeare drew freely on these compositions for the making of his historical plays. His style is purer, but he fully shared the fondness of his compeers and predecessors for grandiloquent periods.

Many considerations, which cannot be noted here, must be taken into account in surveying the literature of the Elizabethan drama. No dramatic literature which can claim to rank beside it—not even that of Athens nor those of modern Italy and Spain, nor those of France and Germany in their classic periods—had to contend against such odds; a mighty inherent strength alone insured to it the vitality which it so triumphantly asserted and which enabled it to run so marvelous a course. Had the creative activity of Elizabethan genius failed to seek in the drama its most attractive and appropriate sphere, the national literature would have lacked its most splendid and peculiar growth. The rich mine of the English language would have remained unexplored and unworked in its fullest capabilities, and the national history and life of England would have missed their most pregnant interpretation.

### Lyly, Marlowe and Peele.

Among Shakespeare's predecessors John Lyly, whose plays were written for the Children of the Chapel and the Children of St. Paul's, holds a position apart in dramatic literature. The euphuism, to which his famous romance—*Euphues*—gave its name, likewise distinguishes his mythological, quasi-historical, allegorical and

satirical comedies. But his real service to the progress of the drama is to be sought neither in his choice of subjects nor in his imagery, though to his fondness for fairy-lore and for the whole phantasmagoria of legend, classical as well as romantic, his contemporaries, and Shakespeare in particular, were indebted for precedents. It lies in his adoption of Gascoigne's innovation of writing plays in prose; and in his having, though under the fetters of an affected and vicious style, given the first example of brisk and vivacious dialogue—an example to which even Shakespeare and Jonson were indebted. Thomas Kyd, the author of the *Spanish Tragedy*, possesses some of the characteristics, but none of the genius, of the greatest tragic dramatist who preceded Shakespeare. No slighter tribute than this is assuredly the due of Christopher Marlowe, whose violent end prematurely closed a career of dazzling brilliancy. His earliest play, *Tamburlaine the Great*, in which the use of blank verse was introduced upon the English stage, while full of the "high-sounding terms" of an extravagant and often bombastic diction, is marked by the passion which was this poet's most characteristic feature, and which was to find expression so luxuriantly in his *Doctor Faustus*, and still more in his *Jew of Malta*. His masterpiece, *Edward II*, is a tragedy of singular pathos and of a dramatic power unapproached by any of his contemporaries excepting only Shakespeare. George Peele was a far more versatile writer, even as a dramatist; but though his plays contain passages of exquisite beauty and strength, as has been shown, they cannot be ranked by the side of *Edward II*. His finest

play is undoubtedly *David and Bethsabe*, which resembles *Edward I* in construction, but far surpasses it in beauty of language and versification, besides treating the subject with superior dignity.

If the difference between Peele and Shakespeare is still, in many respects besides that of genius, an immeasurable one, we seem to come into something like a Shakespearean atmosphere in more than one passage of the plays of the unfortunate Robert Greene, unfortunate perhaps in nothing more than in his notorious enmity to Shakespeare himself. His style, which shone most brightly in plays treating English life and scenes, was in the main free from the pedantry which occasionally besets the flight of Peele's and even of Marlowe's muse; and his most delightful work at all events seems to breathe something of that indescribable freshness which we recognize, if not as a peculiarly Shakespearean characteristic, at least as one belonging to none but a truly national art. Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nash, the redoubtable pamphleteer; Henry Chettle, who worked the chords of both pity and terror with equal vigor, and Anthony Munday, better remembered for his city pageants than for his plays, are also among the more generally-known writers of the early Elizabethan drama, though not all of them can, strictly speaking, be called predecessors of Shakespeare.

The common characteristics of nearly all these dramatists were in accordance with those of the great age to which they belonged. Stirring times called for stirring themes, such as Mahomet, Scipio and Tamerlane, and these again for a corresponding vigor of treatment.

Neatness and symmetry of construction were neglected for fullness and variety of matter. Novelty and grandeur of subject seemed well matched by a swelling amplitude and often by reckless extravagance of diction. As if from an inner necessity, the balance of rhymed couplets gave way to the impetuous march of blank verse; "strong lines" were as inevitably called for as strong situations and strong characters. Distinct as the chief of these poets are from one another through the marks impressed upon both form and matter by individual genius, yet the stamp of the age is upon them all. Writing only for the stage, of which some possessed a personal experience, they acquired an instinctive insight into the laws of dramatic cause and effect, and infused a warm vitality into the dramatic literature which they produced, so to speak, for immediate consumption. On the other hand, the same cause made rapidity of workmanship indispensable to a successful playwright. How a play was produced, how many hands had been at work upon it, what loans and what spoliations had been made in the process, were considerations of less moment than the question whether it was produced and whether it succeeded. His harness, frequently double or triple, was inseparable from the lusty Pegasus of the early English drama, and its genius toiled, to borrow the phrase of the Attic comedian, "like an Arcadian mercenary."

This period of English drama, though far from being one of crude effort, could not therefore yet be one of full consummation. In tragedy the advance which had been made in the choice of great themes, in knitting

closer the connection between the theatre and the national history, in vindicating to passion its rights to adequate expression, was already enormous. In comedy the advance had been less decisive and less independent. Much had been gained in reaching greater freedom of form and something in enlarging the range of subjects; but artificiality had proved a snare in the one direction, while the license of the comic stage, upheld by favorite "clowns," such as Kemp or Tarleton, had not succumbed before more exacting demands. The way of escaping the dilemma had, however, been already recognized to lie in the construction of suitable plots, for which a full storehouse was open in the popular traditions preserved in national ballads, and in the growing literature of translated foreign fiction, or of native imitations of it. Meanwhile the aberration of the comic stage to political and religious controversy, which it could never hope to treat with real freedom in a country provided with a strong monarchy and a dogmatic religion, seemed likely to extinguish the promise of romantic comedy.

### *Merits of Shakespeare's Predecessors.*

Not all, or nearly all, the dramatic works of Shakespeare's predecessors will bear the crucial test. Lyly, unless a pleasing lyrical gift be thought worthy of being taken into account, has been justly described as "a bel esprit, but no poet." Wit, ingenuity and reading he possessed and displayed in abundance; but even the extreme mannerism of style identified with his prose-

romances, and reappearing in all his dramatic works, was not of his own invention. The dexterity with which he moved in the elaborate fetters which he had in this respect imposed upon himself excited the admiration and seemed to challenge the rivalry of his contemporaries, but the progress of the national drama, as a branch of poetic literature, was, except in the domestication of prose-dialogue on the stage, impeded rather than advanced by the father of euphuism. More to be regretted as an aberration from the true principles of poetic creation, though less productive of harm by provoking imitators than his mannerism of style, was Lyly's treatment of his subjects. He depicted personal allegories with so profound a skill on the background of classical mythology that only the amateur detectives of literary criticism will ever derive a thorough enjoyment from the study of his plays. A curious learning alone can find the key; but when it is found it unlocks no secrets of genius. In this direction he doubtless taught something to the mask-writers of his own age as well as of subsequent generations, but nothing to the legitimate drama. The influence of Lyly is traceable in most of his contemporaries, and even in Shakespeare himself; but, with the exception noted above, it affected only the transitory elements in their creations. Happily, the conditions of poetic art are such that this kind of influence vanishes from sight as our attention fixes itself upon more vital and more significant characteristics. Thus the temple of the Elizabethan drama is no more vitiated by the extravagancies of Lyly than is St. Peter's at Rome by the meretricious beauties of

Bernini, whose tawdry compositions were grafted on the sublime conceptions of Michaelangelo.

It was not by exaggerating in the direction of artificiality the traditions of our earlier drama that the predecessors of Shakespeare began to make the dramatic department of English literature its principal feature. What they found was a drama which, though popular in the main source of its origin, was artificial by reason of its imitation of a limited class of models, while at the same time it was still crude and inadequate in form. Tragedy had attached itself to the footsteps of Seneca and his Italian followers in choice of subjects and in method of construction; it was essentially epical in its treatment, the lyrical elements being organically connected with the epical; it occupied itself, so to speak, with the statement of an action rather than with its development out of the characters of the agents. Such was the essential nature of most of the tragedies already described, from *Gorboduc* to *Tancred and Gismund*, from *Promos and Cassandra* to *The Misfortunes of Arthur*. The hopeful beginnings of the historical drama on national subjects, the *Chronicle Histories*, had from the nature of the case even more emphatically exhibited the same characteristics. On the other hand, they had, in comparative warmth and energy of manner, surpassed plays the subjects of which lacked the same connection with the national consciousness, and which moved in the less congenial sphere of classical history and legend or of foreign romance. Comedy was still hovering between the imitation of a late classical type, the reproduction of "Italian devises," the use of the old

mythological and revived pastoral machinery, and the irrepressible desire to introduce, with the incidental ease which comedy hardly ever fails to permit, types of existing manners and of the enduring varieties of human character. Where tragedy and comedy had been combined, their union had been of a perfunctory nature, and tragi-comedy was an avowed hybrid, manifestly exhibiting an imperfect development of species.

### Choice of Themes.

The genius of the predecessors of Shakespeare threw itself with especial ardor into the advancement of the tragic stage. The greatness of the times made this inevitable to poetic capacities of a powerful cast. As the genius of Æschylus was in sympathy with the mighty movement of the great Persian wars, so Marlowe and his fellows, but Marlowe preëminently, claimed for tragedy the full grandeur of heroic themes. A vast canvas seemed needed for such purposes, and it was spread with no faltering hand by the authors of *Tamerlane* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, of *The Battle of Alcazar* and *The Wounds of Civil War*. Nor could subjects of national history fail to commend themselves to a constantly increasing sympathy and to be treated with a new vigor and impetus; in the hands of Peele and Marlowe, at all events, the Chronicle History made a mighty stride in advance toward historical tragedy; and of the early histories ascribed to Shakespeare the world is still in doubt whether they were written by him or by his predecessors. However this may be, in the national



historical drama of the English stage there is no gulf, there is hardly a gap, to interrupt its onward course. In this branch of their endeavor the group of writers under discussion were fully adequate to the progressive demands of their literary task.

The choice of great themes, of which *Tamerlane* set the example, in the first instance rather favored than discouraged an epical manner of treatment, which the dramatic reproduction of the *Chronicles* seemed to make absolutely inevitable. The contemplation of actions mighty in their dimensions and marvellous in their results overpowered reflection on their causes. To will and to achieve seemed the sum of heroic action; to undertake and to fail the full significance of a tragic catastrophe. Marlowe's fiery genius inspired in him a poetic sympathy with passionate resolve, with victorious achievement, with fatal failure. Life in its heroic aspect seemed a struggle of man against fate—it might be said against the conditions of human life itself. In a less impassioned degree the view which other dramatists, as Kyd and Peele, took of the tragic conflict between heroism and circumstance is of the same kind.

Herein they saw but half, and only the lesser half, of the significance of real tragic effect. They knew how to mark with drastic force the great conditions of the conflict, how to express with overpowering energy the terror of the catastrophe. Hence the aberration, which needs no exemplifying, toward the horrible as a source of effect. Marlowe's want of humor made him a prominent offender in this direction, but there is little

to choose between his worst extravagances and the gratification of the morbid taste which prompted them in *Titus Andronicus*. The dramatists of this period had not learned the great lessons taught by the highest examples of the tragic art. They had not learned that vehement passion does not suffice to render a poetic character dramatic; they had not learned that in the connection between the causation of a tragic conflict and its solution lies the really purifying force of its presentment.

### Characterization.

The art of dramatic characterization, in which lies the chief and crowning greatness of Shakespeare, was not inherited by him from his predecessors, though in some of them, notably in Greene, there are proofs of its gradual growth. The conflict, not between man's power and his will, but between his nature and his will, is the real subject of the noblest dramatic art. Marlowe's Faustus perishes because he attempts more than it is allowed to human skill to attempt; Hamlet because his will imposes on him a task to which his nature is unequal. What Marlowe only vaguely felt—that his hero was the author of his own catastrophe—Shakespeare clearly perceived and distinctly expressed. The study of character is the indispensable condition of its depiction as a dramatic reality. Marlowe is too impatient to advance the action of his play to develop it out of its characters. Sometimes, as in the *Jew of Malta*, he begins with a perceptible endeavor; sometimes, as in the *Massacre*, he eschews all efforts in this

direction. Of other contemporary dramatists, Greene, though his hand is lighter, yet displays a more certain touch, and in his *Jane of Scotland* and other plays there is real evidence of power of characterization.

Marlowe and his fellow-dramatists had not brought home to themselves, and could not therefore bring home to their audiences, the real relation between fate and human responsibility. Revenge, for instance, which plays so important a part as the main dramatic motive in a large number of their tragedies, is treated as an inevitable law, as a necessity of Fate. Herein ancient tragedy might seem to furnish a misleading precedent; but ancient tragedy was able to harmonize the working of Fate with the providence of the gods; which was beyond the art of Marlowe and his brethren. The former stood on the basis of the continuity of legend; and even within the bounds of a single trilogy it was possible to show that tragic consummation is not fear, but hope. Victory is the goddess appealed to at the close of more than one Greek tragedy, and there are none which preach the dull, dead fallacy of the irresistible power of circumstances.

But apart from the question of such precedent, the tragedy which is complete in itself can at all times indicate the solution of its conflict, so long as it allows no doubt to remain as to its real causation. The solution lies in the eternal justice of great moral laws, vindicated by the suffering productive of pity and terror which their violation brings forth. Who can fail to recognize this solution in *Richard III*, in *Coriolanus*, in any of Shakespeare's mature tragedies; who will

not seek it in vain in most of the works of his predecessors?

It is in no spirit of depreciation that the defects of the early Elizabethan dramatists have been pointed out. The advance which they had made in choosing great themes for tragic treatment, in sustaining and advancing the dramatic reproduction of passages of national history, in vindicating to passion its right of adequate expression, in beginning to cultivate the art of dramatic characterization, was, as a whole, remarkable. If we are justified in treating the age of Shakespeare's predecessors as a different one from that of Shakespeare himself we need not regard the former as one of mere crude effort and the latter of perfect consummation. They did, however, lack the creative genius which Shakespeare possessed in abundant, and Marlowe in minor, degree.

### Originality.

In comedy the advance had been less decisive, and in no branch of the drama is Shakespeare's originality more marked than in the new spirit which he infused into the English comic drama, amid difficulties to which his efforts seem to have temporarily succumbed. Lyly had done much to facilitate greater freedom of form, and something to enlarge the range of subjects; yet, on the other hand, his laborious endeavors, and those of Nash, impeded the progress of national comedy by leading, as they did, to the cultivation of essentially artificial species. A superabundance of wit, serviceable

as it is at all times to the pamphleteer and the comic essayist, is a danger and a snare to those who essay the drama. It would not be difficult to adduce modern examples; but it is sufficiently attested by the instances before us. Unless the wit of the author is subordinate to his dramatic intention, comic characterization, in which lies the real secret of supreme comic effect, suffers at the expense of mere brilliancy or scintillation of dialogue. A peculiar danger in this respect besets our earlier dramatists in consequence of the usage allowing full license of comic extravagance to the clown, whose ambition it was to say very much more than was set down for him. Kemp and Tarleton were not hampered by a prohibition against adding anything of their own. On the contrary, as Hall tells us, they were free

To laugh and grin and frame the mimic face,  
And jostle straight into the prince's place.

The way out of the difficulty lay in the construction of suitable plots, for which a full storehouse was prepared in the popular traditions preserved in national ballads, and in the growing literature of translated foreign fiction, or of native imitations of it. In the former, Greene at least found materials for comic writing of the highest promise; Peele was, perhaps, nearest to him, nor should Munday's endeavors be overlooked.

### **Diction and Versification.**

To one other point attention may be directed. In no respect had a greater advance been made by Shake-

speare's predecessors than in the outward form of dramatic composition—in diction and versification. Here again the most effective impulse had been given by Marlowe, when in his *Tamerlane* he introduced blank verse into the popular drama. Not long before, in his translation of Ariosto's *Suppositi*, Gascoigne had given the first example of the use of prose in comedy, and Lyly had set the stamp of fashion upon it. The two innovations, taken together, supplied the adequate forms for Shakespeare's art. So long as rhyme prevailed—and its fashion was long and obstinate—true life, which lies in continuity, was impossible to dramatic diction. Marlowe still thought that each line should stand by itself, the sense marking itself off coincidentally with the termination of the verse, and it was for this reason that he forged his lines with such vigor of expression. But this could only be a transitional phase of blank verse, and was so even in Marlowe himself. In his management of metre Shakespeare surpassed his predecessors in freedom, but it was now merely a question of degree; the means themselves had been placed at his disposal by those who came before him. Nor was the free use of prose in comic passages less favorable to the emancipation of the English drama from the trammels of tradition. Lyly, who used it in all his plays, although he tortured it according to the laws of his own style, did good service by establishing its right to be heard on the stage. The great masters of comic dialogue, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, and those who followed them, knew how to profit by the inheritance.

### III.

#### *Shakespeare and His Age.*

Before we join the company of enthusiastic searchers for new facts, great or small, that can bring the personality of Shakespeare into clearer view, let us gauge the towering majesty of his intellectual grandeur in a short glimpse from the gate of this twentieth century, seeing him in the mellowing perspective. Hallam's fine summary places the man upon the right plane.

"The name of Shakespeare is the greatest in our literature; it is the greatest in all literature. No man ever came near him in the creative powers of his mind. No man had ever such strength at once and such variety of imagination. Coleridge has most felicitously applied to him a Greek epithet . . . the thousand-souled—the myriad-minded—Shakespeare. The number of characters in his plays is astonishingly great, without reckoning those which, although transient, have often their individuality all distinct, all types of human life in well-defined differences. . . . Compare with him Homer, the tragedians of Greece, the poets of Italy, Plautus, Cervantes, Molière, Addison, Le Sage, Fielding, Richardson, Scott, the Romancers of the elder

or later schools, one man has far more than surpassed them all. Others may have been as sublime, others may have been more pathetic, others may have equalled him in grace and purity of language, and have shunned some of his faults, but the philosophy of Shakespeare, his intimate searching out of the human heart, whether in the gnomie form of sentence or in the dramatic exhibition of character, is a grand peculiarity of his own."

Such is the tribute which one of the greatest of English essayists pays to the greatest of English bards, and in this he does but voice the sentiment of the literary world; of all, indeed, who have listened to the mighty tones of the great master.

The few facts that are known as to the personal history of England's national poet have been a thousand times related; but little has thus far been said of the educational influences which helped to stimulate his powers, to evoke and strengthen his sympathies, and prepare him for his future work. Before Shakespeare began his career as a dramatist, more than twenty years of his life were passed at Stratford, in the middle shire of the picturesque and richly storied English Midlands, all their beauties being absorbed, as it were, into his blood, and becoming to him almost as the breath of life. Of his home, his parents, and his domestic environment, we know much more than of his personality, and these powerful factors must have acted with redoubled force on a mind so sensitive and richly endowed as his. The portion of Warwickshire in which Shakespeare lived included the thickly wooded region of which the famous forest of Arden was the centre, not greatly changed



from the time of Lear's description of the realm assigned to his daughter Goneril:—

Of all these bounds,—even from this line to this,  
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd  
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads—  
We make thee lady.

### *The Arden District.*

Though encroached upon by the axe and plough, the Arden district still retained enough of its primitive character to fill the poet's imagination with the inspiring sweetness of woodland haunts, the beauty, variety and freedom of sylvan life, and thus to impart to the scenery of *As You Like It* the vivid freshness and reality of a living experience. In this delightful comedy all the details of forest life are touched with so light but sure a hand as to prove the writer's familiarity with the whole art of venery, his thorough knowledge of the "highest franchise of noble and princely pleasure" which the royal demesnes of wood and park afforded. In referring to the marches or margins on the outskirts of the forests, legally known as purlieus, Shakespeare indeed displays a technical accuracy which seems to indicate that, in his early rambles about the forest and casual discourse with its woodmen and keepers, he had picked up the legal phases of sylvan economy, as well as enjoyed the freedom and charm of forest life. Throughout the purlieu the forest laws were only partially in force, while the rights of individual owners were fully recognized. Thus Corin's mas-

ter, dwelling, as Rosalind says in a quaint simile that betrays her sex, "here in the skirts of the forest, like fringe upon a petticoat," could sell "his cote, his flocks, and bounds of feed," and Rosalind and Celia could purchase "the cottage, the pasture, and the flock."

### Deer-hunting.

Only those specially privileged could hunt venison within the forest; but if the deer strayed beyond the forest bounds, they could be freely followed by the dwellers in the purlieus, and these hunting-grounds outside the forest precincts were, in many cases, of extensive area. Thus does the banished duke, while a casual denizen of the forest, propose to make war on its native citizens:—

Come, shall we go and kill us venison?  
And yet it irks me, the poor dappled fools,  
Being native burghers of this desert city,  
Should, in their own confines, with forkéd heads,  
Have their round haunches gored.

The melancholy Jacques, who is ever repining, with his cynical sentimentalism, considers it a special outrage

To fright the animals, and to kill them up,  
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place.

Not only in *As You Like It*, but in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and indeed throughout his dramatic works,

Shakespeare displays an intimate knowledge of forest life, and it is certain that he gained it chiefly from his familiarity with the Arden district. Far to the north of Stratford it extended in all its amplitude and variety of hill and dale, leafy covert and sunny glade, giant oaks and tangled thicket—the woodland stillness broken by the noise of brawling brooks, of feathered outcries and flutterings overhead, and by dappled herds sweeping across the open lawns or twinkling in the shadowy bracken. The deer-stealing tradition is sufficient evidence of the poet's love of daring exploits in this region of vert and venison, and of his devotion, perhaps in a somewhat irregular way, to the attractive woodcraft of the park, the warren, and the chase.

### **Stratford and Its Neighborhood.**

The traditional scene of the adventure was Charlecote park, a few miles northeast of Stratford; but the poet's early wanderings extended much further afield. From Stratford he would pass to Henley and Hampton, to Kenilworth castle, to Stoneleigh abbey, to Warwick keep, and Guy's cliff, the last described by the antiquarian Camden as a remarkably beautiful spot. "Under this hill," he says, "hard by the river Avon, standeth Guy-cliffe, the dwelling-house of Sir Thomas Beau—foe, and the very seate itselfe of pleasantnesse. There have ye a shady little wood, cleere and crystall springs, mossy bottomes and caves, medowes alwaies fresh and greene, the river rumbling here and there among the stones with his stream making a milde noise

and gentle whispering, and besides all this, solitary and stille quietnesse, things most grateful to the Muses." The entire region was richly wooded, the castles and secularized monasteries being paled off within their own parks and grounds from the sylvan wilderness beyond. Some of them, like the celebrated castle of the Mountfords, had been dismantled in the wars of the Roses; but at every point of the journey were "towers and battlements bosomed high in tufted trees." Even at the present day there are more woods and parks in the Arden district than in any county in England.

The central street of Stratford forms a portion of the old Roman road that runs northward to Birmingham and Chester, two others branching off to the east and west. In the sixteenth century it consisted only of a few wood and plaster houses, with low gable roofs, dotting at intervals the roads and cross streets that connected them with each other and with the river. Most of them were surrounded with large gardens, and the space between the houses, together with the unusual width of the streets, gave to the place an open and cheerful look. As prosperity increased, the scattered dwellings closed up their ranks, and presented an almost solid front of stores and hostelryes to the yeomen and graziers, who, with their wives and families, frequented the town on fair and market days. But in Shakespeare's time an irregular line of gables and porches, of penthouse walls and garden palings, with patches of flowers and overarching foliage between, varied the view and refreshed the eye. The thoroughfares took the shape of a central cross, and at the point

of intersection stood the High Cross, a solid stone building with steps below and open arches above, from which proclamations were made, and, as in London and other large towns, sermons were sometimes delivered. An open space around the High Cross was the centre of trading on market-days, and on this site, at a later period, a market house was built.

One of the few traditions preserved of Shakespeare is that, even in the most active period of his London career, he always visited Stratford at least once a year. We know that, during his absence, he continued to take the liveliest interest in the affairs of his native village, and though London was his professional headquarters, he always regarded Stratford as his home. Among other evidences of his local attachment is the part which he took in opposing the enclosure of Welcombe common. As his own proprietary rights were not affected, his strong expression of feeling on this occasion can only refer to its public advantages, its beauty and associations. Welcombe was the most picturesque of Stratford's suburbs. Its hills, divided by the leafy Dingles, with pathways winding irregularly through blue-bell depths and briery hollows, afforded one of the finest panoramic views in the neighborhood. Every acre of the ground was associated with the happiest days of Shakespeare's youth. In his boyish holidays he had repeatedly crossed and recrossed the unfenced fields at the foot of the Welcombe hills on his way to the rustic scenes of his uncle Henry's farm in the outlying forest village. He knew by heart every boundary tree and stone and bank, every pond and sheep-pool,

every barn and cattle-shed, throughout the whole well-frequented circuit. In his own emphatic language, uttered when he had come to spend his last years at Stratford, after the turmoil and excitement of London life, "he could not bear the enclosing of Welcombe." In these words, spoken while revisiting the scenes of his youth—the only authoritative fragment of his conversation that has been preserved to us—is shown his deep and life-long attachment to the place of his birth.

### *Scott and Shakespeare.*

Another illustration of the same feeling, one common to Scott and Shakespeare, is the prudence and foresight displayed by both in husbanding their gains, in order to provide, amid the scenery they loved, a home for themselves and their families. Shakespeare, however, had an advantage which the other had not—that of being an excellent business man, careful and sharp-sighted, running no such risks and meeting with no such reverses as those which saddened Sir Walter's later days. To Washington Irving the latter declared that if he could not see the gray hills and the heather of Abbotsford once a year, he would die; but it was granted to both to spend their last years in the home which their energy and affection had provided, and to sleep their last long sleep amid the fields and streams that gave light and music to their boyhood. Of all great authors, these two are most habitually thought of in connection with their native haunts and homesteads, and so it was with Shakespeare even in the days when

he lived; for to his contemporaries, as well as to all succeeding generations, he was known as "the swan of Avon." In all Britain there is no ground so completely identified with the noblest energies of genius, so consecrated by life-long associations as the banks of the Tweed and the Avon around Abbotsford and Stratford church. To all lovers of literature, to all whose spirits have been touched to finer issues by its regenerating influence, these spots, and above all the abbey grave and the chancel tomb, are holy ground—national shrines visited by pilgrims from every land, who breathe with pride and gratitude and affection the household names of Shakespeare and of Scott.

#### *Shakespeare's Ancestry.*

The name Shakespeare was common in the Midland counties of England two centuries before the poet's birth. In the fifteenth century more than twenty are enumerated as belonging to the guild of St. Anne at Knoll, and from two of these, John and Joan, the great dramatist was probably descended. His grandfather, Richard, occupied a substantial dwelling and cultivated a forest farm at Snitterfield, three or four miles from Stratford, where he lived and died in seeming prosperity. To Richard were born two sons, John and Henry, the former of whom was the father of William Shakespeare. In 1551, discontented with the rustic life at Snitterfield, John removed to Stratford, and there established himself as a trader in one of the principal thoroughfares. A few years later he is described

in the official register as a glover, which at that time included dealing in skins and in various leather-made articles of farming gear, as rough gauntlets and leggings for hedging and ditching, leather gloves for chopping wood, and the like. As his means increased, he also engaged in trade as a butcher, wool-stapler, corn-dealer, and timber-merchant. As Stratford was the centre of a large agricultural and grazing district, and as nearly all his relatives and connections were engaged in farming, he was soon at the head of a thriving business.

### *John Shakespeare.*

John Shakespeare was a man of energy, ambition and public spirit, with the knowledge and ability requisite for pushing his fortune, but with certain defects of character that finally led to failure. Presently we find him taking an active part in public affairs, rising step by step until appointed high-bailiff or mayor of the town. Soon afterward he was married to an heiress of gentle birth, Mary Arden of the Asbie family, who brought him a substantial sum of ready money, with an estate at Wilmcote, and other interests in lands and houses, including Richard Shakespeare's farm at Snitterfield. At this time John is designated as a yeoman, freeholder and gentleman, and has the epithet master affixed to his name, this being equivalent to esquire and used only in relation to men of means and station. The last real property acquired by the mayor was the two houses in Henley street that still remain identified with the name and are consecrated by tradition as the poet's



birthplace, as the Mecca of the thousands who worship at the spot where the great dramatist was born.

But the tide was now on the turn, reverses of fortune following in rapid succession. Soon after settling in the town, John is fined twelve pence for not removing the heap of refuse that had accumulated in front of his door. He is sued for small debts in the bailiff's court, certainly not through lack of means, but, as it seems, from pure negligence. He engaged in too many branches of business; for not content with including the whole list of agricultural products, he also entered into farming on a considerable scale. He was given to free-handed hospitality and fond of pleasurable excitement, as was shown at the time of his mayoralty, when he brought companies of players into the town and gave dramatic performances at the guild hall, thus probably helping to shape his son's career. An increasing family added largely to his expenses, while his official position, combined with his love of good-fellowship, led to much inconsiderate outlay. Piece by piece the estate of John and Mary Shakespeare dwindled away until there was nothing left but the two houses on Henley street, with which he never parted in the darkest hours of his distress. When a tax was levied for military purposes, he was declared a defaulter; a judgment for debt was entered against him, together with an official report that he had no goods on which distraint could be made; he was placed under restraint, and not improbably under arrest; and yet the townsfolk seem, in the main, to have dealt kindly with him. He did not recover from this collapse until the aid of his gifted son

enabled him to hold up his head and take measures for the recovery of his lost position and estate.

During the last few years of the sixteenth century William Shakespeare's success in his profession was fully assured, and he was now on the high road to fame and wealth. As an actor, dramatist, and probably a shareholder in the Blackfriars theatre, he was in receipt of a goodly income, and it was said that he received considerable sums from the young Earl of Southampton, to whom his works were dedicated. Thus he was now as able as he had always been willing to help his father to regain the comfort and dignity to which he had been accustomed. The latter died in 1601, his son's affectionate care permitting him to spend the last years of his life in a manner befitting one who had been a prosperous burgess and mayor of Stratford.

### *Mary Arden.*

Little is known of Mary, mother of William Shakespeare. The oldest and best beloved of the seven daughters of Robert Arden, she was descended from the most ancient of the county families of Warwickshire, its members having more than once filled the posts of high sheriff and lord-lieutenant. Her ancestors are traced back, not only to Norman, but to Anglo-Saxon times, Alwin, an early representative, connected with the royal house of Athelstane, having become sheriff of Warwickshire in the time of Edward the Confessor. On her father's side she was related to Robert Arden, who in the fifteenth century lost his life while

rallying local forces on behalf of the White Rose; on the mother's side to John Hampden, who took so distinguished a part in the civil war between King and Parliament. In the earlier and more prosperous days at Stratford, when all within the home circle was bright and happy, the delightful image of the young mother would melt unconsciously into the boy's mind, fill his imagination, and become a storehouse whence in after years he would draw some of the finest lines in his matchless portraiture of women. In the darker days that followed he would learn something of the vast possibilities of suffering, personal and sympathetic, belonging to a deep and sensitive nature, and as the troubles increased he would gain some insight into the quiet courage and self-possession, the unwearied fortitude, sweetness and dignity which such a nature reveals when stirred to its depths by adversity, and rallying all its resources to meet the inevitable storms of fate. Though genius is without ancestry or lineage, there are elements of character and qualities of mind that, like the features of the countenance and the lines of the bodily frame, seem to be clearly transmissible from parent to child. Shakespeare himself not infrequently recognizes this general truth, and it is chiefly qualities of this kind that he appears to have inherited from his gently born and nurtured mother. It is hardly fanciful to say that in the life and character of the poet we may trace elements of higher feeling and conduct derived from the hereditary culture and courtesy, the social insight and refinement, of the Ardens. Among these elements may be mentioned his strong sense of independ-

ence and self-respect, his delicate feelings of honor, his habitual consideration for others, and his deep instinctive regard for family interests and relationships.

### Characteristics.

The two epithets which those who knew Shakespeare best applied to him most frequently embody some of these characteristics. They unite in describing him as gentle and honest in character, and of an open and free, a frank and generous disposition. The term "gentle" may be taken to represent the innate courtesy, the delicate treatment of others, which belongs in marked degree to those of gentle birth, though by no means confined to them. The second epithet, "honest," which in the usage of the time means honorable, may be taken to express the spirit which, while self-respecting and independent, carefully respects the just claims and rights of his fellow-man. One point which, if not inherited from his mother, must have been derived from her teaching and example, is a nice exactness in money matters—the maxim not lightly to incur pecuniary obligations, and if incurred, to meet them with scrupulous precision and punctuality. This he certainly did not learn from his father, who, though an honest man, was too eager and careless to be very particular in money matters. Indeed, carelessness in this respect seems to have been inherent in the family, his uncle as well as his father being often sued for debt. He doubtless took to heart the lesson of the latter's imprudence; for he realized vividly the rock on which his prosperity

had been wrecked, and before he left home had formed a resolution to avoid it at all hazards. Thus may be explained his business industry, financial skill, and steady progress in worldly success. There is nothing more remarkable in Shakespeare's worldly career than the resolute spirit of independence which he seems to have displayed from the moment he left his straitened household to seek his fortune in the great wilderness of London to the time when he returned to live at Stratford as a man of wealth and position in the town. While many of his fellow dramatists were spendthrifts, in constant difficulties, leading disorderly lives, and sinking into unhonored graves, he husbanded his resources with a rare display of self-control. During his earliest and most trying years in London, he not only kept himself clear of debt and difficulty, but established a reputation for strictly honorable conduct, "divers of worship"—that is men in position and authority—"having reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace of writing." Considering the poet's environment, this is significant testimony, and coming as it does from one of his contemporaries by no means well disposed to him, shows that thus early in his career he was held in high repute. While fond of social life and its enjoyments, and without a touch of harshness or severity in his temper, he held himself thoroughly in hand, and amid the ocean of new experiences and desires on which he was suddenly launched, never abandoned the helm, never lost command over his course, never sacrificed the interests of the future to the pleasures of the passing hour. Of all

Shakespeare's gifts, perhaps those which he possessed in the highest degree were common sense and self-control, and in these is the basis of all true genius; for they are gifts unfortunately all too rare among the masses of mankind, and especially among those who dub themselves poets.

#### **Early Environment.**

Of the eight children of John and Mary Shakespeare, two of the four daughters died in infancy, before the poet's birth, and a third in early childhood. Three sons, in addition to William, and one daughter, lived to maturity. During his early boyhood the affairs of the family were in a prosperous condition, and he doubtless enjoyed all the pleasures and advantages suitable to his age. Among them was plenty of healthy enjoyment of the outdoor recreations of the age, the sports and pastimes, the recurring spectacles and festivities of the town and neighborhood, especially the celebration in forest farms and villages of the chief incidents of the agricultural seasons. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, each brought its own group of picturesque merry-makings, including the more important festivals that evoked much rustic pride and enthusiasm. There were at least three of these forest farms where the boy must have spent many a happy day amid the freedom and delights of country life. He would be present at the shearing feasts, and see the queen of the festival receive her rustic guests and distribute among them her floral gifts. At Wilmecote, in the solid oak-timbered dwelling of the Asbies, with its well-stocked garden and

orchard, the boy would be received with cordial hospitality. At Shottery the welcome of the Shakespeares was no less friendly, for the families were known to each other as early as 1566, and here it was that the poet met his future bride, Anne Hathaway, in all the charm of her sunny girlhood, though reaching early womanhood, while he was yet a stripling. In later youth, when care and poverty were ever-present guests at the Stratford household, he passed much of his time at the Hathaway farm; for notwithstanding the disparity of age, Shakespeare was, in intellectual development, far more advanced than his prospective bride.

In these years he frequently made the rounds of this picturesque neighborhood of Arden forest, with the fresh senses and eager feeling, the observant eye and open mind that left every detail imprinted indelibly on his heart and brain. Hence the apt and vivid references to the scenes and scenery of his youth, the intense and penetrating glances at the most vital aspects, as well as the minutest beauties of nature, with which his dramas abound. As the result of such intimate knowledge and enjoyment, he often seems to reveal in a moment, and by a single touch, as it were, all the loveliness and charm of the objects thus rapidly flashed on the inward eye. In relation to the scenes of his youth what fresh and delightful hours at the farms are reflected in the full summer beauty and motley humors of a sheep-shearing festival in the *Winter's Tale*; in the autumn glow of the "sun-burnt sickleman and sedge-crowned nymphs" of the masque in the *Tempest*; and in the vivid pictures of rural sights and sounds so musi-

cally rendered in the owl and cuckoo songs of *Love's Labour's Lost*!

### Players at Stratford.

In Stratford the chief holiday entertainments were those connected with the Christmas, New Year, and Easter festivals, the May-day rites and games, the Whitsuntide pageants, and the occasional performance of religious and secular plays. Most of these celebrations involved a dramatic element—some hero or exploit, some emblem or allegory, being represented by means of costumed personations, pantomime, and dumb show, often interspersed with songs, dances and dialogues. There were masques and morris-dancing on May-day, as well as mummers and waits at Christmas, and in many towns and villages the exploits of Robin Hood and his associates were also celebrated on May-day, often amid a picturesque confusion of floral emblems and forestry devices. Whitsuntide was the most important season of festive pageantry and scenic display. In addition to the processions of the guild and trades and the usual holiday sports and ale-drinking, there was a distinct element of dramatic representation, patronized by the high-bailiff and council, and to this Shakespeare himself refers in a manner which suggests that in youth he may have taken part in them.

In Shakespeare's later boyhood, say between 1573 and 1584, the best theatrical companies in England, among them that of the Earl of Leicester, frequently visited Stratford, and thus he would have the advantage of seeing the finest of existing dramas acted by the best



players of the time. As he watched the performances of various kinds, from interlude to comedy and tragedy, he would gain a valuable insight into the wide scope and vast resources of the nascent drama, and would also have opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of stage business, management, and effects. As his father was so great a friend of the players, and during his prosperous years in constant communication with them, he would have every facility for studying their art. Curiosity and self-interest would prompt him to find out all he could about the use of stage books, the distribution of parts, the cues and exits, the management of voice and gesture, the graduated passion and controlled power of the leading actors, the just subordination of the minor parts, and the measure and finish of each, on which the success of the whole so largely depended. Moreover, it is not improbable that, in connection with some of the companies, Shakespeare may have tried his hand, both as dramatist and actor, before leaving Stratford. His poetical powers could hardly be unknown, and he may have written scenes and passages to fill out an imperfect or complete a defective play, while from his interest in their work he may have been requested by the actors to appear in some secondary part on the stage. In any case, he would become acquainted with some of the leading players in the best companies, so that when he decided to adopt their profession, he might hope to find occupation among them in London without much difficulty or delay; and so indeed he did, though he never attained to any high rank among the brethren of the craft, never was intrusted

with other than minor parts, his best personation being the ghost in his own *Hamlet*.

### Education.

The scholastic training, which was the least important part in Shakespeare's education, was received in the grammar school at Stratford. This was one of the endowed schools to be found in all considerable towns, and was on an old foundation, dating from the second half of the fifteenth century, and connected with the guild of the Holy Cross. After sharing in the fate of the guild at the suppression of the religious houses, it was restored by Edward VI, and the "King's New School," as now it was called, thus represented the fresh impulse given to education throughout the kingdom by this earnest-minded monarch, well sustained under the enlightened rule of the virgin queen. Latin was the chief scholastic drill, the thorough teaching of the Roman tongue being the purpose for which the grammar schools were originally founded. Greek was hardly introduced into country schools until a later period, but as the language of the learned professions, and still in part of literature, Latin was considered indispensable. Those who completed the course acquired a thorough knowledge of such authors as Ovid and Virgil, Cæsar and Cicero, and if they reached the highest forms, of Plautus and Terence, Horace and Juvenal, together with the tragedies of Seneca. They were also taught to compose and talk in Latin; but except for arithmetic and perhaps a smattering of mathematics,

this was the extent of the curriculum. As Shakespeare remained at least six years at school, and was a youth of exceptional quickness and ability, with more than average industry, he must have received what was then considered a good education, and of this there is sufficient evidence in his writings. Ovid was his special favorite, and the influence of this, the most elegant of Roman poets, is strongly marked and clearly traceable in his poems and earlier plays.

When Shakespeare left school, a year or two before completing the usual course, his education had but just begun; for he was not slow to profit by the greatest of all lessons which school or college can afford, and that was how to educate himself. He became well versed in the best dramatic literature in all languages. He probably acquired some knowledge of French, Italian, and Spanish, though his extensive acquaintance with their drama may have come at second hand; for the best plays of all these nations had been freely rendered into English. That he was a man of vast general information, gathered more from his own observations than from books, need hardly be said, for it appears in every page of his works. He was also skilled in the sciences, and as Pope remarks, "Whatever object of nature or branch of science he either speaks of or describes, it is always with competent, if not extensive knowledge." Among other instances may be mentioned Cassius' account of the sickness of Cæsar, beginning, "He had a fever when he was in Spain," which has been pronounced by physicians a perfect description of a paroxysm of intermittent fever.

The immediate cause of Shakespeare's withdrawal from school seems to have been the growing embarrassments of his father's affairs, the boy being wanted at home to help in the various departments of his business. He had just entered on his fifteenth year, and his school attainments and turn for affairs, no less than his native energy and ability, fitted him for efficient action in almost any open career. But open careers were not numerous at Stratford, and John Shakespeare's once prosperous way of life was now hampered by actual and threatening difficulties which the zeal and affection of his son were powerless to remove or avert. No doubt the boy did his best, trying to understand his father's position and discharging with prompt alacrity any duties that came to be done. But he would soon discover how hopeless such efforts were, and with this deepening conviction there would come upon him the reaction of weariness and disappointment, which is the true inferno of ardent youthful minds. His father's difficulties were evidently of the chronic and complicated kind against which the generous and impulsive forces of youth and inexperience are of little avail. And, after his son had done his utmost to relieve the sinking fortunes of the family, the aching sense of failure would be among the bitterest experiences of his early years, a sharp awakening, indeed, to the realities and responsibilities of life. Within the narrow circle of his own domestic relationship and dearest interests he would feel with Hamlet that the times were out of joint, and in his gloomier moods be ready to curse the destiny that seemed to lay upon him, in part at least, the burden of setting the

obstinately crooked straight; nor was this an easy task, considering the condition of the family's affairs.

### Young Manhood.

As a relief from such moods and a distraction from the fruitless toils of home affairs he would naturally plunge with keener zest into such outlets for youthful energy and adventure as the town and neighborhood afforded. What his actual expectations were during the four years and a half that elapsed between his leaving school and his marriage we have no adequate materials for learning in any detail. But the local traditions on the subject would seem to indicate that after the adverse turn in his fortunes John Shakespeare had considerably contracted the area of his commercial transactions. Having virtually alienated his wife's patrimony by the mortgage of the Asbies and the disposal of all interest in the Snitterfield property, he seems to have given up the agricultural branches of his business, retaining only his original occupation of dealer in leather, skins, and sometimes carcasses as well. His wider speculations had probably turned out ill, and having no longer any land of his own, he apparently relinquished the corn and timber business, restricting himself to the town trades of fellmonger, wool-stapler and butcher. Aubrey, at least, had heard that Shakespeare, after leaving school, assisted his father in these branches; he also reports that for a time the poet was a teacher in a country school, while Malone believed from the internal evidence of his writings that he had spent

two or three years in a lawyer's office. These stories may be taken to indicate what is no doubt true, that at a time of domestic need the poet was ready to turn his hand to anything that offered.

But, however he may have been employed, this interval of home life was for the poet a time of active growth and development, and no kind of business routine could avail to absorb his expanding powers or repress the exuberant vitality of his nature. During these critical years, to his vigorous and healthy mind action of an adventurous and recreative kind must have become an absolute necessity of existence. The necessity was all the more urgent in Shakespeare's case from the narrower circle within which the once-prosperous and expending home life was now confined. We have seen that he occasionally shared the field sports organized by the country gentlemen, where landlords and tenants, yeomen and squires, animated by kindred sentiment, met to a certain extent on common ground. But this long-drawn pursuit of pleasure as an isolated unit in a local crowd would hardly satisfy the thirst for passionate excitement and personal adventure which is so dominant an impulse in the heyday of youthful blood. It is doubtful, too, whether in the decline of his father's fortunes Shakespeare would have cared to join the ranks of these prosperous local sportsmen. He would probably be thrown a good deal among a somewhat lower, though no doubt energetic and intelligent, class of town companions. And they would devise together exploits which, if somewhat irregular, possessed the charm of freedom and novelty, and would thus be congenial to

an ardent nature with a passionate interest in life and action. Such a nature would eagerly welcome enterprises with a dash of hazard and daring in them, fitted to bring the more resolute virtues into play, and develop in moments of emergency the manly qualities of vigilance and promptitude, courage and endurance, dexterity and skill.

### *The Deer-stealing Tradition.*

It would seem, indeed, at first sight as though a quiet neighborhood like Stratford could afford little scope for such adventures. But even at Stratford there were always the forest and the river, the outlying farms with adjacent parks and manor houses, the wide circle of picturesque towns and villages with their guilds and clubs, their local Shallows and Slenders, Dogberries and Verges; and in the most quiet neighborhoods it still remains true that adventures are to the adventurous. That this dictum was verified in Shakespeare's experience seems clear alike from the internal evidence of his writings and the concurrent testimony of local tradition. In its modern form the story of the Bidford challenge to a beer-drinking contest may indeed be little better than a myth. But in substance it is by no means incredible, and if we knew all about the incident, we should probably find there were other points to be tested between the rival companies besides strength of head to resist the effects of the well-known Bidford ale. The prompt refusal to return with his companions and renew the contest on the following day—a decision play-

fully expressed and emphasized in the well-known doggerel lines—implies that in Shakespeare's view such forms of good-fellowship were to be accepted on social, not self-indulgent grounds, that they were not to be resorted to for the sake of the lower accessories only, or allowed to grow into evil habits from being unduly repeated or prolonged. It is clear that this general principle, announced more than once in his writings, guided his own conduct even in the excitable and impulsive season of youth and early manhood. If he let himself go, as he no doubt sometimes did, it was only as a good rider on coming to the turf gives the horse his head in order to enjoy the exhilaration of a gallop, having the bridle well in hand the while and able to rein in the excited steed at a moment's notice. It may be said of Shakespeare at such seasons, as of his own Prince Hal, that he—

Obscur'd his contemplation

Under the veil of wildness; which, no doubt,  
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,  
Unseen, yet crecive in his faculty.

The deer-stealing tradition illustrates the same point, and though belonging perhaps to a later period it may be conveniently noticed here. This fragment of Shakespeare's personal history rests on a much surer basis than the Bidford incident, being supported not only by early and multiplied traditions but by evidence which the poet himself has supplied. Rowe's somewhat formal version of the narrative is to the effect that Shakespeare in his youth was guilty of an extravagance which,



though unfortunate at the time, had the happy result of helping to develop his dramatic genius. This misfortune was that of being engaged with some of his companions more than once in robbing a park belonging to Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote. Sir Thomas, it is said, prosecuted him sharply for the offense, and in retaliation he wrote a satirical ballad upon him, which so incensed the baronet that Shakespeare thought it prudent to leave Stratford and join his old friends and associates, the players, in London. Other versions exist giving fresh details, some of which are on the face of them later additions of a fictitious and fanciful kind.

Whatever may have been the actual circumstances, there can be no doubt that an element of truth is contained in the deer-stealing tradition. The substantial facts in the story are that Shakespeare in his youth was fond of woodland sports, and that in one of his hunting adventures he came into collision with Sir Thomas Lucy's keepers and fell under the ban of that local potentate. This is indirectly confirmed in his inimitable sketch of the formal country justice—under the name of Robert Shallow—in the *Merry Wives of Windsor* and the *Second Part of Henry IV*. To talk of the sketch as an act of revenge is to treat it too seriously, for Shakespeare could hardly be expected to resist the temptation of turning to dramatic account so admirable a subject for humorous portraiture. His fondness for woodland life is supported by numerous allusions to the subject in his earlier plays, as well as in his sonnets. The entire action of *Love's Labour's Lost* takes place in

a royal park, while the scene of the most critical events in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a forest inhabited by outlaws, who, on being pardoned, become the loyal followers of the duke. It seems as though Shakespeare could hardly conceive of a royal palace or capital city without a forest close at hand as the scene of princely sport, criminal intrigue or fairy enchantment. Outside the gates of Athens, swept over hill and dale the wonderful forest which is the scene of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in *Titus Andronicus* imperial Rome seems to be almost surrounded by the brightness and terror, the inspiring charm and sombre shades of rolling forest lawns and ravines, the "ruthless, vast and gloomy woods."

### Marriage.

There can be no doubt that much of Shakespeare's life at Stratford was passed in the forest, but in later youth he would be more often found hastening through the fields to Shottery, paying long visits at the Hathaway farm, followed by late and reluctant leavetakings; for the next important fact in his personal history is his marriage with Anne Hathaway. This event took place in the summer of 1582, when he was in his nineteenth year, his bride being seven or eight years older. It has been stated by many of his biographers that the marriage was hasty, unsuitable and unhappy in its results; but of this there is not a particle of evidence. The marriage could not have been a hasty one, for, as we have seen, Shakespeare had known Anne Hathaway from early boyhood. As to its being unhappy, every-

thing goes to show that it was a union of mutual affection and a most fortunate event for the poet himself. His whole course was changed by the new influence, and with his growing responsibilities his character seems to have rapidly matured and his powers to have found fresh and more effective development. His first child, Susanna, was born in May, 1583, and less than two years afterward the family was enlarged by the birth of twins, named Hamnet and Judith after some lifelong friends. Thus, before attaining his majority, the poet had a wife and three children dependent upon him, with little apparent opportunity of advancing his fortunes in Stratford. The situation was a sufficiently serious one, and was further complicated by his father's increasing embarrassments. Four children, the youngest barely five years old, remained to be provided for by John Shakespeare, who was also being constantly sued for debt and in seeming danger of arrest. All this was enough to make a much older man than the poet look anxiously about him; but with the unfailing sense and sagacity which he displayed in practical affairs, he seems to have formed a just and sober estimate of his own power and made a careful survey of the various fields available for their exercise. As the result he decided in favor of trying the metropolitan stage. He had already tested his ability as an actor on the provincial boards, and once in London, where new pieces were constantly required, he would have full scope for the exercise of his gifts as a dramatist. At the outset he could only expect to find the lower occupation, but at this time, with the growing popular demand for plays,

the actor's calling, though not without social drawbacks, was a lucrative one.

### *The Stage as a Business.*

Greene, in his autobiographical sketch *Never Too Late*, illustrates this point in an account of his early dealings with the players and his experiences as a writer for the stage. Speaking through his hero, Francesco, he says that "when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb he fell in amongst a company of players, who persuaded him to try his wit in writing of comedies, tragedies or pastorals, and if he could perform anything worth the stage, then they would largely reward him for his pains." Succeeding in the work, he was so well paid that he soon became comparatively wealthy. Although writing from the author's rather than the actor's point of view, Greene intimates that the players grew rapidly rich and were entitled both to praise and profit so long as they were "neither covetous nor insolent." In the *Return from Parnassus*, published in 1601, the large sums, fortunes indeed, realized by good actors are referred to as matter of notoriety. One of the disappointed academic scholars, indeed, moralizing on the fact with some bitterness, exclaims—

England affords those glorious vagabonds,  
That carried erst their fardles on their backs,  
Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,  
Sweeping it in their glaring satin suits,  
And pages to attend their masterships.  
With mouthing words that better wits have framed  
They purchase lands, and now esquires are made.

And in a humorous sketch entitled *Ratseis Ghost*, published a few years later, an apparent reference to Shakespeare himself brings out the same point. The hero of the tract, Ratsey, a highwayman, having compelled a set of strolling players to act before him, advised their leader to leave the country and go to London, where, having a good presence for the stage and a turn for the work, he would soon fill his pockets, adding: "When thou feelest thy purse well lined buy thee some place of lordship in the country, that, growing weary of playing, thy money may bring thee dignity and reputation." The player, thanking him for his advice, replies: "I have heard, indeed, of some that have gone to London very meanly, who have in time become exceedingly wealthy." The movement to the London stage was, therefore, from a worldly point of view, a prudent one, and for the higher purposes of Shakespeare's life it was equally wise and necessary. For, besides the economic and practical considerations of the step, there must have pressed on the poet's mind the importance of a wider sphere of life and action for the enlargement of his inward horizon, and the effective development of his poetical and dramatic gifts

#### **Early Days in London.**

The stories of Shakespeare's first occupations in London are probably founded on fact. He was at first employed in a very humble capacity, snuffing the candles, perhaps, or some other half-menial task. If he did not himself take charge of visitors' horses, he

had in his employ a number of juvenile assistants, engaged for the purpose and known as Shakespeare's boys. In connection with the theatre were open sheds or temporary stables, and each of these boys probably took charge of a horse while its owner was at the play. Thus was supplied a defect in the local arrangements, of which complaints had often been made by mounted gallants. But this was, of course, a brief experience in Shakespeare's early career; for he soon found more congenial occupation in the green room, on the stage, and above all, in the laboratory of his own teeming brain.

### **Knowledge of French and Italian.**

The little leisure that remained to Shakespeare, during his first years in London, was devoted to continuing his education and equipping himself for his future work. It was probably at this time that he acquired the knowledge of French and Italian which his writings suggest; for his acquaintance with the drama of both was so perfect that it can hardly have been derived from translations, though of these he freely availed himself. Among Shakespeare's friends was John Florio, an Italian by birth, who, after completing his education at Oxford, engaged in teaching and literary work in London, associating with eminent men of letters and their noble patrons. After the accession of James I he became tutor to Prince Henry, received a court appointment, and was a personal favorite of Queen Anne. Florio was given to writing eulogistic verse, and in this, at times, Shakespeare assisted him, as appears from in-

ternal evidence, and especially in a sonnet prefixed to Florio's *Second Fruits*, showing all the characteristics of Shakespeare's style. It was probably from him that the poet derived his knowledge of French and Italian, for he taught both languages, and was reputed as the best teacher of the day.

### Italian Plots and Incidents.

From Italian sources Shakespeare borrowed the plots and incidents of at least a dozen of his plays. Of these, however, he chose only the healthier materials, leaving to Webster and Ford the more revolting stories of cruelty and lust. Such materials he used, not only for plot and incident, but as a kind of canvas for his matchless portraiture of human character and action. They are also apparent in points of structure and diction, in racial and individual types, and in shades of local coloring, which realize and express in concentrated form the bright and lurid, the brilliant and passionate features of Southern life. The majority of the *dramatis personæ* in his comedies, as well as in some of his tragedies, have Italian names, and not a few of them, as Mercutio and Gratiano, Iago and Iachimo, are as Italian in nature as in name. The moonlight scene in the *Merchant of Venice* is Italian in every detail, and *Romeo and Juliet*, in coloring, incident and passion, is Italian throughout. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare even appears as a critic of Italian style, as when, in the players' tragedy, the murderer poisons the duke, Hamlet exclaims, "He poisons him in the garden for his estate.

His name's Gonzago; the story is extant and written in very choice Italian." In reading the best translations, he would be increasing his command over the elements of expressive phrase and diction which were the verbal instruments of his art, but he would also desire to possess, and doubtless did possess, the key that would unlock the entire treasure-house of Italian literature. As to Shakespeare's knowledge of French the evidence is so abundant that it need not here be stated.

### *The London Stage.*

It is recorded that, in 1594, Shakespeare was a member of the Chamberlain's company, which performed at the Theatre and Curtain in Shoreditch. In December of that year the company gave a performance before the queen at Greenwich palace, after which the poet's name appears, in company with Richard Burbage and others, among the list of players to be rewarded "for two severall comedies or enterludes showed by them before her Majestie in Christmas tyme." Among the group of players in the pay of Henslowe at the Newington theatre are Edward Alleyn as leading actor, Marlowe and Greene, Peele and Nash, "and to these we may add an obscure, but useful and worthy fellow, named William Shakespeare." This was Lord Strange's company, by which was performed, in 1591, the first part of Henry VI, as to the authorship of which there was at this time some dispute. The performance was both popular and profitable, ten thousand spectators, as we are told by Nash, witnessing it within a few weeks.



While, during his earlier years in London, Shakespeare acted at several theatres, he was chiefly identified with the Earl of Leicester's players, of whom James Burbage was the head. It was mainly to Burbage, as we have seen, that the earliest London theatres owed their existence, that they were established as a feature of metropolitan life, and that the principal companies were relieved from the stigma of being strolling players, transferring their exhibitions, hitherto given on scaffolds in the court-yards of inns to permanent play-houses. When Shakespeare went to London there were theatres on both sides of the Thames—the outlying houses being chiefly used during the summer and autumn months, while the Blackfriars, roofed in and protected from the weather, was specially used for performances during the winter season. In spite of the persistent opposition of the Lord Mayor and city aldermen, the denunciations of Puritan preachers and their allies in the press, and difficulties arising from intermittent attacks of the plague and the occasional intervention of the court authorities, the theatres had now taken firm root in the metropolis; and, strong in royal favor, in noble patronage, and above all, in popular support, the stage had already begun to assume its higher functions as the living organ of the national voice, the many-colored mirror and reflection of the national life.

A few years later, the companies of players and the theatres they occupied were consolidated and placed on a still firmer basis. For some years past, in addition to the actors really or nominally attached to noble

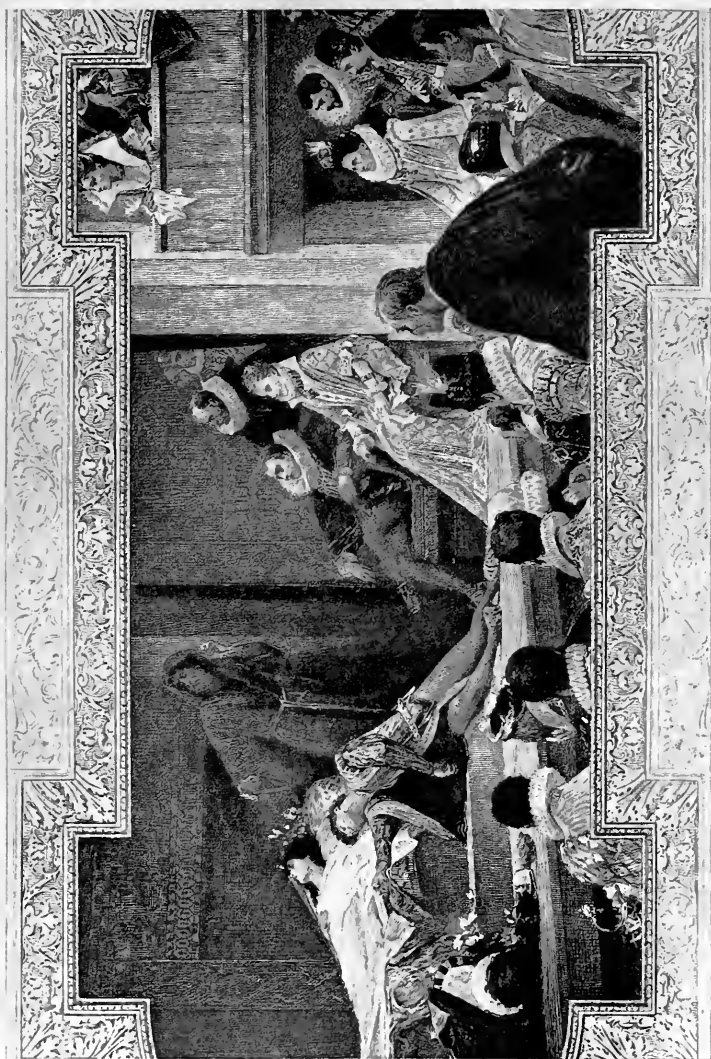
houses, there had existed a body of twelve performers, selected by royal authority from different companies and known as the Queen's players. The Earl of Leicester's, being the leading company, had naturally furnished a number of recruits to the Queen's players, whose duty it was to act at special seasons before her Majesty and the court. But within a few years after Shakespeare arrived in London the chief groups of actors were divided into two great companies, specially licensed and under the patronage respectively of the lord chamberlain and the lord admiral. Under the new arrangement the Earl of Leicester's actors became the servants of the lord chamberlain. James Burbage had already retired, his place being taken by his more celebrated son Richard, the Garrick of the Elizabethan stage, who acted all the leading parts in Shakespeare's plays.

### *The Globe and Blackfriars.*

In order that the company might have houses of its own, both for summer and winter use, Richard Burbage, his brother Cuthbert, and their associates, including Shakespeare, undertook in 1598 to build a new theatre, not far from the old Paris Garden circus. We know from a subsequent document, which refers incidentally to the building of this theatre, that the Burbages had introduced Shakespeare to the Blackfriars company. He had indeed proved himself so useful, both as actor and poet, that they were evidently glad to secure his future services by giving him a share as part proprietor in the Blackfriars property. The new

*THE GLOBE THEATRE, LONDON*  
*After an original painting by W. A. Lenders*

*The Globe Theatre, London, built in 1598, is famous for its association with all the greatest dramas and dramatists of the past four hundred years.*





theatre now built was the one known as the Globe, already mentioned, and here was for fifteen years, during the summer and autumn months, the popular home of the Shakespearean drama. Three years earlier Richard Burbage and his associates had rebuilt the Blackfriars on a more extended scale; and this well-known house divided with the Globe the honor of producing Shakespeare's later and more important plays. Shakespeare's position, indeed, as actor and dramatist, is identified with these houses and with the Lord Chamberlain's company, to which they belonged. On the accession of James I, this company, being specially favored by the new monarch, received a fresh charter, and its members were thenceforth known as the King's servants.

In the early years of Shakespeare's professional career the national drama had thus a permanent home in theatres conveniently central on either side of the river, and was crowded during the summer and winter months by eager audiences. Even in the best theatres the appliances in the way of scenes and stage machinery were of the simplest description, change of scene being often indicated by the primitive device of a board with the name painted upon it. But players and playwrights, both arts being often combined in the same person, knew their business thoroughly well, and relied for success on the more vital attractions of powerful acting, vigorous writing, and practiced skill in the construction of their pieces. In the presence of strong passions expressed in kindling words, and powerfully realized in living action, gesture and incident, the ab-

sence of canvas sunlight and painted gloom was hardly felt, and the want of more elaborate and realistic scenery was abundantly supplied by the excited fancy, active imagination and concentrated interest of the spectators.

### *The Elizabethan Drama.*

The dramatic conditions of a national theatre were indeed, at the outset of Shakespeare's career, more complete, or rather, in a more advanced state of development, than the playhouses themselves or their stage accessories. If Shakespeare was fortunate in entering on his London work amidst the full tide of awakened patriotism and public spirit, he was equally fortunate in finding ready to his hand the forms of art in which the rich and complex life of the time could be adequately expressed. During the last decades of the sixteenth century the playwright's art had undergone changes so important as to constitute a revolution in the form and spirit of the national drama. For twenty years after the accession of Elizabeth the two roots whence the English drama sprung—the academic or classical, and the popular, developed spontaneously in the line of mysteries, moralities and interludes—continued to exist apart, and to produce their accustomed fruit independently of each other. The popular drama, it is true, becoming more secular and realistic, enlarged its area by collecting materials from all sources—from novels, tales, ballads and histories, as well as from fairy mythology, local superstitions and folk-lore. But these incongruous elements were, for the most part, handled



in a crude and semi-barbarous way, with just sufficient art to satisfy the cravings and clamors of unlettered audiences. The academic plays, on the other hand, were written by scholars for courtly and cultivated circles, were acted at the universities, the inns of court, and at special public ceremonials, and followed, for the most part, the recognized and restricted rules of the classic drama.

But in the third decade of Elizabeth's reign another dramatic school arose, intermediate between the two elder ones, and seeking to combine in a newer and higher form the best elements of both. The main impulse guiding the efforts of the new school may be traced indirectly to a classical source. It was due not immediately to the masterpieces of Greece and Rome, but to the form which classical art had assumed in the contemporary drama of Italy, France and Spain, especially of Italy, which was the one earliest developed and best known to the new school of poets and dramatists. This southern drama, while academic in its leading features, had nevertheless modern elements blended with the ancient form. As the Italian epics, following in the main the older examples, were still charged with romantic and realistic elements unknown to the classical epic, so the Italian drama, constructed on the lines of Seneca and Plautus, blended with the severer form essentially romantic features. With the choice of heroic subjects, the orderly development of the plot, the free use of the chorus, the observance of the unities, and constant substitution of narrative for action, were united the vivid coloring of poetic fancy and diction and the

use of materials and incidents derived from recent history and contemporary life. The influence of the Italian drama on the new school of English playwrights was, however, almost restricted to points of style and diction, of rhetorical and poetical effect. It helped to produce among them the sense of artistic treatment, the conscious effort after higher and more elaborate forms and vehicles of imaginative and passionate expression.

For the rest, the rising English drama, in spite of the efforts made by academic critics to narrow its range and limit its interests, retained and thoroughly vindicated its freedom and independence. The central characteristics of the new school are sufficiently explained by the fact that its leading representatives were all of them scholars and poets, living by their wits and gaining a somewhat precarious livelihood amid the stir and bustle, the temptations and excitement, of London life. The distinctive note of their work is the reflex of their position as academic scholars working under poetic and popular impulses for the public theatres. The new and striking combination in their dramas of elements hitherto wholly separated is but the natural result of their attainments and literary activities. From their university training and knowledge of the ancients they would be familiar with the requirements of dramatic art, the deliberate handling of plot, incident and character, and the due subordination of parts essential for producing the effect of an artistic whole. Their imaginative and emotional sensibility, stimulated by their studies in Southern literature, would naturally prompt them to combine features of poetic beauty and rhetorical finish

with the evolution of character and action; while from the popular native drama they derived the breadth of sympathy, sense of humor and vivid contact with actual life which gave reality and power to their representations.

*Greene, Peele and Marlowe.*

The leading members of this group or school in relation to the future development of the drama were Greene, Peele and Marlowe. They were almost the first English poets and men of genius who devoted themselves to the production of dramatic pieces for the public theatres, and they all helped to make the plays represented poetical and artistic as well as lively, bustling and popular. Some did this rather from stress of circumstance than from any higher aim or deliberately formed resolve; but Marlowe, the greatest of them, avowed the redemption of the common stage as the settled purpose of his labors at the outset of his dramatic career. And during his brief and stormy life he nobly discharged his self-imposed task. His first play, *Tamburlaine the Great*, struck the note of artistic and romantic tragedy. With all its extravagance and overstraining after vocal and rhetorical effect, the play throbs with true passion and true poetry, and has throughout the stamp of emotional intensity and intellectual power. His later tragedies, while marked by the same features, bring into fuller relief the higher characteristics of his passionate and poetical genius. Alike in the choice of subject and method of treatment Marlowe is thoroughly independent, deriving

little, except in the way of general stimulus, either from the classical or popular drama of his day. The signal and far-reaching reform which he effected in dramatic metre by the introduction of modulated blank verse is one of the strongest evidences of his originality. Gifted with a fine ear for the music of English numbers, and impatient of "the giggling veins of rhyming mother wits," he introduced the noble metre which was at once adopted by his contemporaries and became the vehicle of the great Elizabethan drama. The new metre quickly abolished the rhyming couplets and stanzas that had hitherto prevailed on the popular stage. The rapidity and completeness of this metrical revolution is in itself a powerful tribute to Marlowe's rare insight and feeling as a master of musical expression.

The originality and importance of Marlowe's innovation are not materially affected by the fact that one or two pseudo-classical plays, such as *Gorboduc* and *Jocasta*, had been already written in unrhymed verse. In any case these were private plays, and the monotony of cadence and structure in the verse excludes them from anything like serious comparison with the richness and variety of vocal effect produced by the skillful pauses and musical interlinking of Marlowe's heroic metre. Greene and Peele did almost as much for romantic comedy as Marlowe had done for romantic tragedy. Greene's ease and lightness of touch, his freshness of feeling and play of fancy, his vivid sense of the pathos and beauty of homely scenes and thorough enjoyment of English rural life, give to his dramatic sketches the blended charm of romance and reality

hardly to be found elsewhere except in Shakespeare's early comedies. In special points of lyrical beauty and dramatic portraiture, such as his sketches of pure and devoted women and of witty and amusing clowns, Greene anticipated some of the more delightful and characteristic features of Shakespearean comedy. Peele's lighter pieces and Lyly's prose comedies helped in the same direction. Although not written for the public stage, Lyly's court comedies were very popular, and Shakespeare evidently gained from their light and easy, if somewhat artificial tone, their constant play of witty banter and sparkling repartee, valuable hints for the prose of his own comedies.

Marlowe prepared the way for another characteristic development of Shakespeare's dramatic art. His *Edward II* marks the rise of the historical drama, as distinguished from the older chronicle play, in which the annals of a reign or period were thrown into a series of loose and irregular metrical scenes. Peele's *Edward I*, Marlowe's *Edward II*, and the fine anonymous play of *Edward III*, in which many critics think Shakespeare's hand may be traced, show how thoroughly the new school had felt the rising national pulse and how promptly it responded to the popular demand for the dramatic treatment of history. The greatness of contemporary events had created a new sense of the grandeur and continuity of the nation's life, and excited among all classes a vivid interest in the leading personalities and critical struggles that had marked its progress. There was a strong and general feeling in favor of historical subjects, and especially historical subjects

having in them elements of tragical depth and intensity. Shakespeare's early plays, dealing with the distracted reign of King John, the wars of the Roses, and the tragical lives of Richard II and Richard III, illustrate this bent of popular feeling. The demand, being met by men of poetical and dramatic genius, reacted powerfully on the spirit of the age, helping in turn to illumine and strengthen its loyal and patriotic sympathies.

This is in fact the keynote to the English stage in the great period of its development. It was its breadth of national interest and intensity of tragic power that made the English drama so immeasurably superior to every other contemporary drama in Europe. The Italian drama languished because, though carefully elaborated in point of form, it had no fullness of national life, no common elements of ethical conviction or aspirations, to vitalize and ennoble it. Even tragedy, in the hands of Italian dramatists, had no depth of human passion, no energy of heroic purpose, to give higher meaning and power to its evolution. In Spain the dominant courtly and ecclesiastical influences limited the development of the national drama, while in France it remained from the outset under the artificial restrictions of classical and pseudo-classical traditions. Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries, in elevating the stage and filling it with poetry, music and passion, had attracted to the theatre all classes, including the more cultivated and refined; and the intelligent interest and robust life of so representative an English audience supplied the strongest stimulus to the more perfect development of the great organ of national expression.

The forms of dramatic art, in the three main departments of comedy, tragedy and historical drama, had, as we have seen, become clearly discriminated and evolved in their earlier stages.

### *Shakespeare's Preëminence.*

It was a moment of supreme promise and expectation, and the supreme poet and dramatist appeared to more than fulfill the utmost promise of the time. By right of imperial command over all the resources of imaginative insight and expression Shakespeare combined the rich dramatic materials already prepared into more perfect forms, and carried them to the highest point of ideal development. He quickly surpassed Marlowe in passion, music and intellectual power; Greene in lyrical beauty, elegiac grace and narrative interest; Peele in picturesque touch and pastoral sweetness, and Lyly in bright and sparkling dialogue. And having distanced the utmost efforts of his predecessors and contemporaries he took his own higher way, and reigned to the end without a rival in the new world of supreme dramatic art which he had created. It is a new world, because Shakespeare's works alone can be said to possess the organic strength and infinite variety, the throbbing fullness, vital complexity and breathing truth of nature itself.

In point of artistic resource and technical ability—such as copious and expressive diction, freshness and pregnancy of verbal combination, richly modulated verse and structural skill in the handling of incident

and action—Shakespeare's supremacy is indeed sufficiently assured. But, after all, it is the spirit and substance of his work, his power of piercing to the hidden centres of character, of touching the deepest springs of impulse and passion, out of which are the issues of life, and of evolving those issues dramatically with a flawless strength, subtlety and truth, which raises him so immensely above and beyond not only the best of the playwrights who went before him, but the whole line of illustrious dramatists that came after him. It is Shakespeare's unique distinction that he has an absolute command over all the complexities of thought and feeling that prompt to action and bring out the dividing lines of character. He sweeps with the hand of a master the whole gamut of human experience, from the lowest note to the very top of its compass, from the sportive childish treble of Mamilus and the pleading boyish tones of Prince Arthur up to the spectre-haunted terrors of Macbeth, the tropical passion of Othello, the agonized sense and tortured spirit of Hamlet, the sustained elemental grandeur, the Titanic force and utterly tragical pathos of Lear.

### *Greene's Jealousy.*

As early as 1592 Shakespeare is publicly recognized, not only as an actor of distinction, but as a dramatist whose work had excited the envy and indignation of his contemporaries, and especially of one so accomplished and eminent, so good a scholar and master of the playwright's craft, as Robert Greene. Greene had,



it is true, much of the irritability and excitable temper often found in the subordinate ranks of the poetical fraternity, and he often talks of himself, his doings and associates in a highly-colored and extravagant way. But his reference to Shakespeare is especially deliberate, being in the form of a solemn and last appeal to his friends among the scholarly dramatists to relinquish their connection with the presumptuous and ungrateful stage. In his *Groatsworth of Wit*, published by his friend Chettle a few weeks after his death, Greene urges three of his friends, apparently Marlowe, Lodge and Peele, to give up writing for the players. "Base-minded men, all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned; for unto none of you like me sought those burs to cleave; those puppets, I mean, who speak from our mouths, those anticke garnisht in our colors. . . . There is an upstart Crow, beautified in our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you, and, being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is, in his own conceit, the only Shakescene in the country. Oh, that I might entreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let these apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions."

This curious passage bears testimony to Shakespeare's assured position and rapid advance in his profession. The very term of reproach applied to him, "Johannes Factotum," is a tribute to his industry and practical ability. From the beginning of his career he

must have been in the widest and best sense a utility man, ready to do any work connected with the theatre and stage, and eminently successful in all he undertook. He had evidently made his mark as an actor, as it is in that character he is referred to by Greene, and denounced for going beyond his province and usurping the functions of the dramatist. Greene's words imply that Shakespeare was not only acknowledged as a good actor, but that he was already distinguished by his dramatic success in revising and rewriting existing plays. This is confirmed by the parodied line—"a tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide"—from the third part of *Henry VI*, revised, if not originally written by Shakespeare, and produced before Greene's death, which took place in September, 1592. Indeed, all the three parts of *Henry VI*, in the revised form, appear to have been acted during the spring and summer of that year. It is not improbable that two or three of Shakespeare's early comedies may also have been produced before Greene's death; and if so, his resentment, as an academic scholar, against the country actor who had not only become a dramatist, but had excelled Greene himself in his chosen field of romantic comedy, becomes intelligible enough. Even in his wrath, however, Greene bears eloquent witness to Shakespeare's diligence, ability and success, both as actor and playwright. Of Shakespeare's amazing industry, and also of his success, there is ample evidence. Within six or seven years he not only produced the brilliant reflective and descriptive poems of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, but at least fifteen of his dramas, including tragedies, comedies

and historical plays. After finding his true vocation he worked during these years as a master, having full command over the materials and resources of his art. The dramas produced have a fullness of life and a richness of imagery, a sense of joyousness and power, that speak of the writer's exultant absorption and conscious triumph in his chosen work. The sparkling comedies and great historical plays belonging to this period evince the ease and delight of an exuberant mind realizing its matured creations.

### *England in the Elizabethan Age.*

Nor after all is this result surprising. Shakespeare entered on his London career at the very moment best fitted for the full development of his dramatic genius. From the accession of Elizabeth, all the dominant impulses and leading events of her reign had prepared the way for the splendid triumph of policy and arms that closed its third decade, and for the yet more splendid literary triumph of the full-orbed drama that followed. After the gloom and terror of Mary's time, the coming of Elizabeth to the crown was hailed with exultation by the people, and seemed in itself to open a new and brighter page of the nation's history. Elizabeth's personal charms and mental gifts, her high spirit and dauntless courage, her unfailing political tact and judgment, her frank bearing and popular address, combined with her unaffected love for her people and devotion to their interests, awakened the strongest feelings of personal loyalty, and kindled into passionate ardor the spirit of

national pride and patriotism that made the whole kingdom one. The most powerful movements of the age directly tended to reënforce and concentrate these awakened energies. While the Reformation and Renaissance had liberalized men's minds and enlarged their moral horizon, the effect of both was at first of a political and practical rather than of a purely religious or literary kind. The strong and exhilarating sense of civil and religious freedom, realized through the Reformation, was inseparably associated with the exultant spirit of nationality it helped to stimulate and diffuse. The Pope and his emissaries, the Jesuits, were looked upon far more as foreign enemies menacing the independence of the kingdom than as religious foes and firebrands seeking to destroy the newly established faith. The conspiracies, fomented from abroad, that gathered around the captive queen of Scots, the plots successively formed for the assassination of Elizabeth, were regarded as murderous assaults on the nation's life, and the Englishmen who organized them abroad or aided them at home were denounced and prosecuted with pitiless severity as traitors to their country. Protestantism thus came to be largely identified with patriotism, and all the active forces of the kingdom, its rising wealth, energy and intelligence were concentrated to defend the rights of the liberal empire against the assaults of despotic Europe represented by Rome and Spain.

These forces gained volume and impetus as the nation was thrilled by the details of Alva's ruthless butcheries, and the awful massacre of St. Bartholo-

mew, until at length they were organized and hurled with resistless effect against the greatest naval and military armament ever equipped by a Continental power—an armament that had been sent forth with the assurance of victory by the wealthiest, most absolute and most determined monarch of the time. There was a vigorous moral element in that national struggle and triumph. It was the spirit of freedom, of the energies liberated by the revolt from Rome, and illuminated by the fair humanities of Greece and Italy, that nerved the arm of that hardy breed of men in the day of battle, and enabled them to strike with fatal effect against the abettors of despotic rule in church and state. The material results of the victory were at once apparent. England became mistress of the seas, and rose to an assured position in Europe as a political and maritime power of the first order. The literary results at home were equally striking. The whole conflict reacted powerfully on the genius of the race, quickening into life its latent seeds of reflective knowledge and wisdom, of poetical and dramatic art.

Of these effects the rapid growth and development of the national drama was the most brilliant and characteristic. There was indeed at the time a unique stimulus in this direction. The greater number of the eager excited listeners who crowded the rude theatres from floor to roof had shared in the adventurous exploits of the age, while all felt the keenest interest in life and action. And the stage represented with admirable breadth and fidelity the struggling forces, the mingled elements, humorous and tragic, the passionate

hopes, deep-rooted animosities, and fitful misgivings of those eventful years. The spirit of the time had made personal daring an almost universal heritage; with noble and commoner, gentle and simple, alike, love of queen and country was a romantic passion, and heroic self-devotion at the call of either so common as not to excite remark. To act with energy and decision in the face of danger, to strike at once against any odds in the cause of freedom and independence, was the desire and ambition of all. This complete unity of national sentiment and action became the great characteristic of the time. The dangers threatening the newly liberated kingdom were too real and pressing to admit of anything like seriously divided councils, or bitterly hostile parties within the realm. Everything thus conspired to give an extraordinary degree of concentration and brilliancy to the national life. For the twenty years that followed the destruction of the Armada, London was the centre and focus of English life. Here gathered the soldiers and officers who had fought against Spain in the Low Countries, against France in Scotland, and against Rome in Ireland. Along the river-side, and in noble houses about the Strand, were the hardy mariners and adventurous sea captains, such as Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher, who had driven their dauntless keels into unknown seas, who had visited strange lands and alien races in order to enlarge the knowledge, increase the dominions, and augment the wealth of their fellow-countrymen. Here assembled the noble councillors, scholars and cavaliers whose foresight and skill guided the helm of state, whose ac-

accomplishments in letters and arms gave refinement and distinction to court pageants and ceremonials, and whose patronage and support of the rising drama helped to make the metropolitan theatre the great centre of genius and art, the great school of historical teaching, the great mirror of human nature in all the breadth and emphasis of its interests, convictions and activities.

### *An Educational Medium.*

The theatre was, indeed, the living organ through which all the marvellous and mingled experiences of a time incomparably rich in vital elements found expression. There was no other, or, at least, no organized or adequate means, of popular expression. Books were a solitary entertainment in the hands of the few; newspapers did not exist; and the modern relief of incessant public meetings was, fortunately, perhaps, an unknown luxury. And yet, amid the plenitude of national life centred in London, the need for some common organ of expression was never more urgent or imperious. New and almost inexhaustible springs from the fountain-heads of intellectual life had for years been gradually fertilizing the productive English mind. The heroic life of the past, in clear outline and stately movement, had been revealed in the recovered masterpieces of Greece and Rome. The stores of more recent wisdom and knowledge, discovery and invention, science and art, were poured continually into the literary exchequer of the nation, and widely diffused among eager and open-minded recipients. Under this combined stimulus the

national intellect and imagination had already reacted fruitfully in ways that were full of higher promise. The material results of these newly-awakened energies were, as we have seen, not less signal or momentous.

The number, variety and power of the new forces thus acting on society effected, in a short period, a complete moral revolution. The barriers against the spread of knowledge and the spirit of free inquiry, erected and long maintained by mediæval ignorance and prejudice, were not thrown down. The bonds of feudal authority and Romish domination that had hitherto forcibly repressed the expanding national life were effectually broken. Men opened their eyes upon a new world which it was an absorbing interest and endless delight to explore—a new world physically, where the old geographical limits had melted into the blue atmosphere of distant horizons—a new world morally, where the abolition of alien dogma and priestly rule gave free play to fresh and vigorous social energies; and, above all, more surprising and mysterious than all, they opened their eyes with a strange sense of wonder and exultation on the new world of the emancipated human spirit. At no previous period had the popular curiosity concerning human life and human affairs been so vivid and intense. In an age of deeds so memorable, man naturally became the centre of interest, and the world of human action and passion, character and conduct, was invested with irresistible attraction. All ranks and classes had the keenest desire to penetrate the mysterious depths, explore the unknown regions, and realize as fully as might be the actual achievements and ideal possibilities of the



nature throbbing with so full a pulse within themselves and reflected so powerfully in the world around them. Human nature, released from the oppression and darkness of the Middle Ages, and emerging with all its infinite faculties and latent powers into the radiant light of a secular day, was the new world that excited an admiration more profound and hopes more ardent than any recently-discovered lands beyond the sinking sun. At the critical moment Shakespeare appeared as the Columbus of that new world. Pioneers had, indeed, gone before, and in a measure prepared the way, but Shakespeare still remains the great discoverer, occupying a position of almost lonely grandeur in the sublimity and completeness of his work.

Never before, except perhaps in the Athens of Pericles, had all the elements and conditions of a great national drama met in such perfect union as when the greatest of dramatists began to devote his genius to the theatre. Shakespeare's career as a writer of plays can have differed little in its beginnings from those of his contemporaries and rivals. Before or while he was proceeding from the retouching and rewriting of the plays of others to original dramatic composition, the most gifted of his predecessors had passed away. He had been decried as an actor before he was known as an author; and after living through days of darkness for the theatre, if not for himself, attained, before the close of the sixteenth century, to the beginnings of his prosperity and the beginnings of his fame. But if we call him fortunate, it is not because of such rewards as these. As a poet, Shakespeare was no doubt happy in his times,

which intensified the national character, expanded the national mind, and were able to add their stimulus even to such a creative power as his. He was happy in the antecedents of the form of literature which commended itself to his choice, and in the opportunities which it offered in so many directions for an advance to heights yet undiscovered and unknown. What he actually accomplished, however, was mainly due to his own genius, whose achievements are as vast as itself.

## IV.

### *Shakespeare's Earlier Comedies.*

Although it is unnecessary to remind the reader that literary and social standards have greatly changed since Shakespeare's day, it none the less requires a positive mental effort to realize the full significance of so trite a fact. To put ourselves in the place of the people who lived three hundred years ago is by no means as easy a feat as it seems on the surface; yet it must be seriously attempted if we are to get full value out of our reading of the old plays, and not less so when we see them acted.

### *Social Characteristics.*

Mental culture is one thing and manners another. The Elizabethans showed us to what heights the inspirations of genius, or, as some prefer to call it, the cultivation of talent, can soar. Yet we affect to blush at what we label the coarseness of their talk and behavior. Modern society has gradually imposed upon itself certain minor codes of conduct which, by the multiplicity of their superficial trivialities, do much to obscure the vital principles which remain few and simple. We are

in some danger of forgetting that external polish does not change an inferior quality of leather into the best.

Queen Elizabeth was a philosophical, scholarly, clear-headed woman, with a taste for the beautiful and a breadth of view that betokened the quality of greatness, but nothing is more certain than that she would never have been admitted into the polite society of our time; except, it should be said, by the moneyed circles that toady to every type of vulgar, eccentric and notorious character whose wealth or flashy posings have been a nine days' wonder. That royal lady slapped her courtiers on the face; she swore a good round oath on occasion, and breakfasted on hot roast beef washed down with copious libations from a tankard of old ale. This was the time-honored usage of the period, and would no more be tolerated among us than would the dreary inanities of modern fashionable life have been endured by the men of Armada times.

The artificial polish which puts an end to everything like free original communication, and subjects all intercourse to the insipid uniformity of certain rules, was wholly unknown to the age of Shakespeare. It possessed, on the other hand, a fullness of healthy vigor, which showed itself always with boldness, and sometimes also with petulance. The spirit of chivalry was not yet wholly extinct, and a queen who was far more jealous in exacting homage to her sex than to her throne, and who, with her determination, wisdom and magnanimity, was, in fact, well qualified to inspire the minds of her subjects with an ardent enthusiasm, inflamed that spirit to the noblest love of glory and re-

noun. The feudal independence also still survived in some measure; the nobility vied with each other in splendor of dress and number of retinue, and every great lord had a small court of his own. The distinction of ranks was as yet strongly marked; a state of things greatly in favor of the dramatic poet. In conversation people of fashion took pleasure in quick and unexpected answers, and the witty sally passed rapidly round from mouth to mouth. This, and the fondness for play on words, which King James shared, may doubtless now be considered as instances of poor taste, but should not, therefore, be taken as evidence of rudeness and barbarity. These strained repartees are frequently employed by Shakespeare, with the view of painting the society of his day, although he held them in derision. Thus Hamlet says to the gravedigger, "By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe." And Lorenzo, in the *Merchant of Venice*, alluding to Launcelot:

O, dear discretion, how his words are suited!  
The fool hath planted in his memory  
An army of good words: and I do know  
A many fools, that stand in better place,  
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricky word  
Defy the matter.

### Bluntness of Speech.

Shakespeare repeatedly lays great and marked stress on a correct and refined tone of society, and lashes every

deviation from it, whether of boorishness or affected foppery; not only does he give admirable discourses on it, but he represents it in all its shades and modifications by rank, age or sex. What foundation is there, then, for the alleged barbarity of his age? Its offenses against propriety? But if this is to be admitted as a test, then the ages of Pericles and Augustus must also be described as rude and uncultivated, for Aristophanes and Horace, who both were considered as models of urbanity, display at times the coarsest indelicacy. In this particular the diversity in the moral feeling of ages depends on other causes. Shakespeare, it is true, sometimes introduces us to improper company; at others he suffers ambiguous expressions to escape in the presence of women, and even from women themselves. He certainly did not indulge in this merely to please the multitude, for in many of his pieces there is not the slightest trace of this sort to be found, and in what virgin purity are many of his female characters worked out! When we see the liberties taken by other dramatic poets in England in his time, and even much later, we must account him comparatively chaste and moral. Neither must we overlook certain circumstances in the existing state of the theatre. The female parts, as we have seen, were not acted by women, but by boys, and none of the fair sex appeared in the theatre without masks. Thus disguised, much might be heard by them, and much might be ventured to be said in their presence which under other circumstances would have been absolutely improper.

It is certainly to be wished that decency should be

observed on all public occasions, and especially on the stage; but even in this it is possible to go too far. The prudishness which scents out impurity in every bold sally is, at best, but an ambiguous criterion of purity of morals, and beneath this hypocritical guise there often lurks the consciousness of an impure imagination. The determination to tolerate nothing which has the least reference to the sensual relation between the sexes may be carried to a pitch extremely oppressive to a dramatic poet and highly prejudicial to the boldness and freedom of his compositions. If such considerations were to rule, many of the happiest parts of Shakespeare's plays, for example, in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, which, nevertheless, are handled with a due regard to decency, must be set aside as sinning against this affected propriety. In the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus, in those of Wycherley and Congreve, in the works of Swift and Rabelais, there is ten times as much coarseness as in the plays of Shakespeare.

Had no other monument of the age of Elizabeth come down to us than the works of Shakespeare, we should from them alone have formed the most favorable idea of its social culture and enlightenment. When those who see nothing in these plays but rudeness and barbarity cannot deny such arguments as have been put forward they are usually driven to this last resource, and demand: "What has Shakespeare to do with the mental culture of his age? He had no share in it. Born in an inferior rank, ignorant and uneducated, he passed his life in low society and labored to please a vulgar

audience for his bread, without ever dreaming of fame or posterity."

*Shakespeare's Social Standing.*

In this there is not a single word of truth, though it has been a thousand times repeated. It is true that we know very little of his life, and what we do know consists in part of somewhat doubtful anecdotes, hardly more reliable than those which are told at inns to inquisitive strangers who visit the birthplace or neighborhood of any celebrated man. Within a comparatively recent period some original documents have been brought to light, and among them his will, which, as will presently appear, gives us a peep into his family concerns.

At first a humble player, and then a writer, the poetical fame which in the progress of his career he afterward acquired greatly contributed to ennoble the stage, and to bring the player's profession into better repute. Even at a very early age he endeavored to distinguish himself as a poet in other walks than those of the stage, as is proved by his juvenile poems of *Adonis* and *Lucrece*. He quickly rose to be a shareholder and also manager of the theatre for which he wrote, and he was admitted to the society of persons of distinction. He found a liberal and kind patron in the earl of Southampton, the friend of the unfortunate Essex. His pieces were not only the delight of the public, but also in great favor at court; the two monarchs under whose reigns he wrote were, according to reliable testimony, greatly pleased with him. Many were acted at court, and Elizabeth



appears herself to have commanded the writing of more than one to be acted at her court festivals. King James, it is well known, honored Shakespeare so far as to write to him with his own hand. This is very unlike either contempt or banishment into the obscurity of a low circle. By his labors as a poet, player and stage-manager, Shakespeare acquired a considerable property, which, in the last years of his too short life, he enjoyed in his native town in retirement and in the society of a beloved daughter. Immediately after his death a monument was erected over his grave, which may be considered sumptuous for those times.

In the midst of such brilliant success, and with such distinguished proofs of respect and honor from his contemporaries, it would be singular, indeed, if Shakespeare, notwithstanding the modesty of a great mind, should never have dreamed of posthumous fame. As a profound thinker he had pretty accurately taken the measure of the circle of human capabilities, and he could say to himself with confidence that many of his productions would not easily be surpassed. What foundation, then, is there for the contrary assertion, which would degrade the immortal artist to the situation of a daily laborer for a rude multitude? Merely this, that he himself published no edition of his entire works. We do not reflect that a poet, always accustomed to labor immediately for the stage, who has often enjoyed the triumph of overpowering assembled crowds of spectators, and drawing from them the most tumultuous applause, who the while was not dependent on the caprice of crotchety stage-directors, but left to his own discretion to select and de-

termine the mode of theatrical representation, naturally cares much less for the closet of the solitary reader. During the first formation of a national theatre, more especially, we find frequent examples of such indifference. Of the almost innumerable pieces of *Lopé de Vega*, many undoubtedly were never printed, and are consequently lost; and *Cervantes* did not print his earlier dramas, though he certainly boasts of them as meritorious works. As *Shakespeare*, on retiring from the theatre, left his manuscripts behind with his fellow-managers, he may have relied on theatrical tradition for handing them down to posterity, which would, indeed, have been sufficient for that purpose if the closing of the theatres, under the tyrannical intolerance of the Puritans, had not interrupted the natural order of things. We know, besides, that the poets of that time used to sell the exclusive copyright of their pieces to the theatre; it is therefore not improbable that the right of property in his unprinted pieces was no longer vested in *Shakespeare*, or had not at least yet reverted to him. His fellow-managers entered on the publication seven years after his death, as it would appear, on their own account and for their own advantage.

#### *Classification of the Plays.*

To group the plays of *Shakespeare* in classes is better than by dates. Certain critics have contended that all *Shakespeare's* works belong substantially to the same species, although sometimes one ingredient, sometimes another—the invention of the wonderful or the imita-

tion of the real, the pathetic or the comic, seriousness or irony—may preponderate in the mixture. Shakespeare himself, it would appear, did but laugh at the petty endeavors of critics to find out divisions and subdivisions of species, and to hedge in what had been so separated with the most anxious care; thus the pedantic Polonius in *Hamlet* commends the players for their knowledge of “tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical, scene undividable or poem unlimited.” On another occasion he ridicules the limitation of tragedy to an unfortunate catastrophe:

And tragical, my noble lord, it is;  
For Pyramus therein, doth kill himself.

However, the division into comedies, tragedies and historical dramas, according to the usual practice, may in the main be adopted, if we do not lose sight of the transitions and affinities. The subjects of the comedies are usually romantic love tales; none are altogether confined to the sphere of common or domestic relations; all possess poetical ornament; some run into the marvellous or the pathetic. With these, two of the most famous tragedies are connected by an immediate link, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, both true romances, and composed on the same principles. In many of the historical plays a considerable space is occupied by comic characters and scenes; others are serious throughout, and leave behind a tragical impression. The essential circumstance by which they are distinguished is that the plot bears reference to a poetical and national interest.

This is not equally the case in *Hamlet*, *Lear* and *Macbeth*, and therefore we do not include these tragedies among the historical pieces, though the first is founded on an ancient Norse legend; the second on a national tradition, and the third comes within the limits of Scottish history, after it ceases to be fabulous.

### Shakespearean Comedy.

Shakespeare's comedy is by no means restricted to the plays which fall under this head. It is intermingled with the grandest of his tragic scenes, as in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and interwoven with the serious parts where romantic fables or historic events are made the subject of a noble and elevating exhibition. But he does not therefore intend, in defiance of his better judgment, to humor the tastes of the multitude; for in various pieces, and especially when the catastrophe is approaching, and the mind more on the stretch and no longer likely to give heed to diversion, he has abstained from all such comic intermixtures. It was also an object with him that the clowns or buffoons should not occupy a more important place than he had assigned them, and he expressly condemns the extemporizing with which they loved to enlarge their parts. Johnson justifies the species of drama in which seriousness and mirth are mixed by the fact that in real life the vulgar is found close to the sublime, that the mirthful and the sad usually accompany or succeed one another. But it does not follow that because both are found together they must therefore not be separable in the composi-

tions of art, and the mixture of such dissimilar and apparently contradictory ingredients in the same works can only be justifiable on principles reconcilable with the views of art. In the dramas of Shakespeare the comic scenes are the antechamber of the poetry, where the servants remain; these prosaic attendants must not raise their voices so high as to deafen the speakers in the presence-chamber; nevertheless, in those intervals when the ideal society has retired, they deserve to be listened to; their bold raillery, their presumption of mockery, may afford many an insight into the situation and circumstances of their masters.

Shakespeare's comic talent is no less wonderful than that which he has shown in the pathetic and tragic; it stands on an equal elevation, and possesses equal extent and profundity. He is even more inventive in comic situation and motives; for it will be hardly possible to show whence he has taken any of them, whereas, in his serious dramas, he has usually laid hold of some well-known story. His comic characterization is just as true, various and profound as his serious. So little is he disposed to caricature, that rather, it may be said, many of his traits are almost too nice and delicate for the stage, that they can only be made available by a great actor, and fully understood by an audience of exceptional culture and intelligence. Not only has he delineated many kinds of folly, but even of sheer stupidity has he contrived to give a most diverting and entertaining picture. There is also in his plays a peculiar species of the farcical, which apparently seems to be introduced more arbitrarily, but which is founded on im-

itation of some actual custom. This is the introduction of the merry-maker, the fool with his cap and bells, and motley dress, called more commonly in England clown. He appears in several comedies, but among the tragedies in *Lear* alone, and, as a rule, merely exercises his wit in conversation with the principal persons, though sometime incorporated into the action. In these days it was not only usual for princes to have their court fools, but many distinguished families kept such a housemate as an antidote against the insipidity and weariness of ordinary life, and a welcome interruption of established formalities. Great statesmen and even ecclesiastics did not consider it beneath their dignity to recruit and solace themselves after important business with the conversation of their fools, and the celebrated Sir Thomas More had his fool painted along with himself by Holbein. Shakespeare appears to have lived immediately before the time when the custom began to be abolished; for in the English comic authors who succeeded him the clown is no longer to be found. The dismissal of the fool has been extolled as a proof of refinement, and our honest forefathers have been pitied for taking delight in such a coarse and farcical amusement. Yet we are rather disposed to believe that the practice was dropped from the difficulty of finding fools able to do justice to their parts. In *Twelfth Night* Viola says:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,  
And to do that well craves a kind of wit;  
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,  
The quality of the persons, and the time;

And like the haggard, check at every feather  
That comes before his eye. This is a practice  
As full of labor as a wise man's art:  
For folly that he wisely shows is fit,  
But wise men's folly fall'n taints their wit.

On the other hand, reason, with all its conceit of itself, has become too timid to tolerate such bold irony; it is always careful lest the mantle of its gravity should be disturbed in any of its folds; and rather than allow a privileged place to folly beside itself, it has unconsciously assumed the part of the ridiculous; but, alas, a heavy and cheerless ridicule. It would be easy to make a collection of the excellent sallies and biting sarcasms which have been preserved of celebrated court fools. It is well known that they frequently told such truths to princes as are never now told to them. Shakespeare's fools, along with somewhat of an overstraining for wit, which cannot altogether be avoided when wit becomes a separate profession, have for the most part an incomparable humor, and a great abundance of intellect, enough, indeed, to supply a host of ordinary wise men.

### *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.*

The earlier comedies include *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Comedy of Errors*. The first named depicts the irresolution of love, and its infidelity to friendship, pleasantly, yet with something of the levity of mind which a passion suddenly entertained, and as suddenly given up, presupposes. The faithless lover is at last, on account of a

very ambiguous repentance, forgiven without much difficulty by his first mistress; for the more serious part, the premeditated flight of the daughter of a prince, the capture of her father along with herself by a band of robbers, of which one of the Two Gentlemen, the betrayed and banished friend, has been against his will elected captain—for all this a peaceful solution is found. It is as if the course of the world was obliged to accommodate itself to a transient youthful caprice, called love. Julia, who accompanies her faithless lover in the disguise of a page, is, as it were, a light sketch of the tender female figures of a Viola and an Imogen, who, in other plays of Shakespeare, leave their homes in similar disguise on love adventures, and to whom a peculiar charm is communicated by the display of the most maidenly modesty in their hazardous and problematical situation. This play has been severely criticised; Coleridge pronounces it a mere sketch, and there is no necessity to make it a greater work than it is.

### *The Comedy of Errors.*

*The Comedy of Errors* is founded on the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, but entirely recast and enriched with new developments; of all the works of Shakespeare this is the only example of imitation or borrowing from the ancients. To the two twin brothers of the same name are added two slaves, also twins, impossible to be distinguished from each other, and of the same name. The improbability becomes by this means doubled; but when once we have lent ourselves to the first, which



certainly borders on the incredible, we shall not perhaps be disposed to cavil at the second; and if the spectator is to be entertained by mere perplexities they cannot be too much varied. In such pieces we may, to give to the senses at least an appearance of truth, suppose that the parts by which the misunderstandings are occasioned are played with masks, and this the poet perhaps intended. It has been objected by some critics that the discovery is too long deferred; but while novelty and interest are possessed by the perplexing incidents, there is no need to be in dread of weariness. And this is really the case here; matters are carried so far that one of the two brothers is first arrested for debt, then confined as a lunatic, and the other is forced to take refuge in a sanctuary to save his life. In a subject of this description it is impossible to steer clear altogether of the farcical element, of abusive language and blows; Shakespeare has, however, endeavored to ennoble the play. Two scenes dedicated to jealousy and love interrupt the course of perplexities which are solely occasioned by the illusion of the external senses. A greater solemnity is given to the discovery, from the prince presiding, and from the reunion of the long separated parents of the twins.

The two Dromios are not so distinctly marked in their points of difference as the Antipholus twins. Each has his merry jests; each can take a thrashing with wonderful good temper; witness the apostrophe on the virtues of beating: "When I am cold he heats me with beating; when I am warm he cools me with beating; I am waked with it when I sleep; raised with it when I sit;

driven out of doors with it when I go from home; welcomed home with it when I return." The Dromio of Ephesus is precise and antithetical, striving to utter his jests with becoming gravity, and approaching a pun with a solemnity that is often diverting:

The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;  
The clock has stricken twelve upon the bell;  
My mistress made it one upon my cheek;  
She is so hot, because the meat is cold.

On the contrary, the jests of Dromio of Syracuse are the outpourings of a merry heart. He is a creature of prodigious animal spirits, running over with fun and queer similitudes. He makes not the slightest attempt at arranging a joke, but utters what comes uppermost with irrepressible volubility. He is an untutored wit, but doubtless made his lengthy descriptions endurable to his master. What a prodigality of wit, for instance, is displayed in his description of the bailiff, and again of the kitchen-maid, coarse, indeed, in parts, but irresistibly droll. Both the Dromios are admirable in their way, but he of Syracuse is far superior to his brother of Ephesus.

#### *Love's Labour's Lost.*

A very popular play in Shakespeare's time was his *Love's Labour's Lost*, or, as it is entitled in the first edition of 1598, "a pleasaunte-conceyted comedie, called *Love His Labour Lost*, as it was presented before her Highness this last Christmas, newly corrected and augmented." The piece is a humorous display of

frolie; a whole cornucopia of the most vivacious jokes is emptied into it. That it was written in Shakespeare's youth is perceivable in the lavish superfluity of labor in the execution; the unbroken succession of plays on words, and sallies of every description, hardly leave the spectators time to breathe; the sparkles of wit fly about in such profusion that they resemble a blaze of fireworks, while the dialogue, for the most part, is in the same hurried style in which the passing masks at a carnival attempt to banter each other. The young king of Navarre, with three of his courtiers, has made a vow to pass three years in rigid retirement and devote them to the study of wisdom; for that purpose he has banished all female society from his court and imposed a penalty on intercourse with women.

But no sooner has he, in a pompous harangue, worthy of the most heroic achievements, announced this determination when the daughter of the king of France appears at his court, in the name of her old and bed-ridden father, to demand the restitution of a province which he held in pledge. Compelled to give her audience, he falls immediately in love with her. Matters fare no better with his companions, who on their parts renew an old acquaintance with the princess' attendants. Each in heart is already false to his vow, without knowing that the wish is shared by his associates; they overhear one another, as they in turn confide their sorrows in a love-ditty to the solitary forest; everyone jeers and confounds the one who follows him. Biron, who from the beginning was the most satirical among them, at last steps forth and rallies the king and the two others,

till the discovery of a love-letter forces him also to hang down his head. He extricates himself and his companions from their dilemma by ridiculing the folly of the broken vow, and, after a noble eulogy on women, invites them to swear new allegiance to the colors of love. This scene is inimitable, and the crowning beauty of the whole.

The manner in which the men afterward prosecute their love-suits in masks and disguises, and in which they are tricked and laughed at by the ladies, who are also masked and disguised, is, perhaps, spun out too long. It may be thought, too, that the poet, when he suddenly announces the death of the king of France, and makes the princess postpone her answer to the young prince's serious advances till the expiration of the period of her mourning, and imposes, besides, a heavy penance on him for his levity, is outside the sphere of comedy. But the tone of raillery, which prevails throughout the piece, made it hardly possible to bring about a more satisfactory conclusion; after such extravagance, the characters could not return to sobriety, except under the presence of some foreign influence. The grotesque figures of Don Armado, a pompons, fantastic Spaniard, a couple of pedants and a clown, who between whiles contributes to the entertainment, are the creation of a whimsical imagination, and well adapted as foils for the wit of so vivacious a society.

Charles Lamb used to speak of *Love's Labour's Lost* as the "Comedy of Leisure," and certain it is that in the commonwealth of King Ferdinand of Navarre all the men are idle, and the women, also. The courtiers in

their pursuit of "that angel knowledge" waste their time in subtle contentions how that angel is to be won; the ladies from France keep up their round of jokes with Boyet, "the wit's peddler," and everybody is merry in idleness. The settlement of affairs between France and Navarre is deferred until morrow, and whether Aquitaine goes back to France or the hundred thousand crowns return to Navarre we never learn. The king and his courtiers then forswear their studies, and every man becomes a lover and a sonneteer. The refined traveller from Spain resigns himself to his passion for the dairymaid; the schoolmaster and the curate talk learnedly after dinner, and at last the king, the nobles, the priest, the pedant, the braggart, the page and the clown join in one dance of mummery, in which they all laugh and are laughed at.

#### *All's Well That Ends Well.*

*All's Well That Ends Well* is the old story of a young maiden whose love looked much higher than her station. She obtains her lover in marriage from the hand of the king as a reward for curing him of a hopeless and lingering disease by means of an hereditary arcanum of her father's, who had been in his lifetime a celebrated physician. The young man despises her virtue and beauty; concludes the marriage only in appearance, and seeks in the dangers of war deliverance from a domestic entanglement which wounds his pride. By faithful endurance and an innocent fraud she fulfills the apparently impossible conditions on which the count had promised to acknowledge her as his wife. Love appears

here in humble guise; the wooing is on the woman's side; it is striving, unaided by a reciprocal inclination, to overcome the prejudices of birth. But as soon as Helena is united to the count by a sacred bond, though by him considered an oppressive chain, her error becomes her virtue. She affects us by her patient suffering; the moment in which she appears to most advantage is when she accuses herself as the persecutor of her inflexible husband, and, under the pretext of a pilgrimage to atone for her error, privately leaves the house of her mother-in-law.

Johnson expresses a cordial aversion for Count Bertram, and regrets that he should be allowed to escape at last with no other punishment than a temporary shame, nay, even be rewarded with the unmerited possession of a virtuous wife. But has Shakespeare ever attempted to soften the impression made by his unfeeling pride and perversity? He has but given him the good qualities of a soldier. And does not the poet paint the true way of the world, which never makes much of man's injustice to woman, if so-called family honor is preserved? Bertram's sole justification is that, by the exercise of arbitrary power, the king thought proper to constrain him in a matter of such delicacy and private right as the choice of a wife. Besides, this story, as well as that of Grissel and many similar ones, is intended to prove that woman's truth and patience will at last triumph over man's abuse of his superior power, while other novels and fabliaux are, on the other hand, satires on woman's inconstancy and cunning. In this piece old age is painted with rare favor: the plain hon-

esty of the king, the good-natured impetuosity of old Lafeu, the maternal indulgence of the countess to Helena's passion for her son, seem all as it were to vie with each other in endeavors to overcome the arrogance of the young count. The style of the whole is more sententious than imaginative, for the glowing colors of fancy could not with propriety have been employed on such a subject. In the passages where the humiliating rejection of the poor Helena is most painfully affecting, the cowardly Parolles steps in to the relief of the spectator. The mystification by which his pretended valor and his shameless slanders are unmasked must be ranked among the most comic scenes that ever were invented; they contain matter enough for an excellent comedy, if Shakespeare were not always rich even to profusion. Falstaff has thrown Parolles into the shade, otherwise among the poet's comic characters he would have been still more famous.

By Coleridge the play has been described as the counterpart of *Love's Labour's Lost*. The labor of love which is lost is not a very earnest labor. The king and his courtiers would win their mistress by "bootless rhymes and speeches penn'd," and thus their most sincere declarations are only received as "mocking merriment." The concluding speeches of the ladies to their lovers show clearly that Shakespeare intended to explain the reason why their labor was lost—it was labor hastily taken up, pursued in a light temper, and assuming the character of "pleasant jest and courtesy." But the princess and her ladies would not be thus lightly won. They would not accept fine speeches as labor without

a year's probation. What would naturally be the counterpoise of such a story? One of passionate, enduring, all-pervading love, a love that shrinks from no difficulty, resents no unkindness, fears no disgrace, but perseveres, under the most adverse circumstances, to vindicate its own claims by its own energy, and to achieve success by the strength of its own will. This is the labor of love which is won, and this is the story of *All's Well That Ends Well*.

When Helena, in the first scene, describes the hopelessness of her love—

It were all one  
That I should love a bright, particular star  
And think to wed it, he is so far above me.

She does not expect to come within his sphere without some extraordinary effort, and she proposes to make that effort:

My project may deceive me,  
But my intents are fix'd and will not leave me.

Very beautifully does Shakespeare relieve us from the feeling that it is unsexual for the task to be undertaken by Helena, and very delicately does he make her hold to her determination, even while she confesses to the countess the secret of her love:

My friends were poor but honest; so's my love;  
Be not offended; for it hurts not him  
That he is loved of me; I follow him not  
By any token of presumptuous suit;  
Nor would I have him till I do deserve him.



Her feelings amount almost to agony when Bertram refuses her, and even then she abandons only for a moment her fixed intent:

That you are well restor'd, my lord, I'm glad;  
Let the rest go.

After the marriage and the desertion her constancy is still incessantly tasked. Love now assumes the aspect of duty. "What more commands he? In everything I wait upon his will," is all the reply she makes to the harsh dictates of her lord, conveyed by a frivolous messenger. In her parting interview with Bertram, in which he hardly attempts to conceal his coldness and dislike, the same spirit is displayed. But a still harder trial awaits her. Her lord announces his final abandonment of her, except on conditions seemingly impossible, but her intense love has destroyed all feeling of self.

Poor lord! is't I  
That chase thee from thy country, and expose  
Those tender limbs of thine to the event  
Of the non-sparing war?

Presently we find her in Florence, after which the plot is such as Shakespeare could only have found in the legendary history of an age preserved from oblivion by a genius kindred to his own.

A critic has well remarked: "All the circumstances and details with which Helena is surrounded are shocking to our feelings and wounding to our delicacy, and yet the beauty of her character is made to triumph over

all. To be tremblingly alive to gentle impressions, and yet be able to preserve, when the prosecution of her design requires it, an immovable heart amidst even the most imperious causes of subduing emotion is, perhaps, not impossible, but it is one of the rarest endowments of humanity."

Bertram is a puzzle to those who look without tolerance on human motives and actions, and from a one-sided view he has no redeeming qualities. "I cannot reconcile my heart to Bertram," says Johnson, "a man noble without generosity and young without truth; who marries Helena as a coward and leaves her as a profligate; when she is dead by his unkindness sneaks home to a second marriage, is accused by a woman whom he has wronged, defends himself by falsehood, and is dismissed to happiness." But without his defects the dramatic action could not have proceeded; without his merits the dramatic sentiment could not have been maintained. From the first Shakespeare had made us understand that the pride of birth in Bertram constrained him to regard Helena as greatly his inferior, and when the king proposes her to him as a wife, he assigns only one reason for rejecting her; but that is all in all:

I know her well;  
She had her breeding at my father's charge;  
A poor physician's daughter my wife!

If Bertram could have seen Helena with the eyes of his mother, as

A maid too virtuous  
For the contempt of empire——

or with those of the king and of Lafeu, he would not have rejected her, and the comedy would have been merely a common love-tale. As to his failings, all Shakespeare's tolerance is put forth to make us understand that Bertram is not isolated in his vices, and that they are not alone to be regarded in our estimates of character. "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues." It is in this spirit that Shakespeare undoubtedly intended we should judge Bertram.

Parolles is exactly what he is described by Helena:

I know him a notorious liar,  
Think him a great way fool, solely a coward.

To the insults of Lafeu he has nothing to oppose—neither wit nor courage—and his very impudence is overborne. All this is but a preparation for the comic scenes in which his folly, his falsehood and his cowardice combine to make him odious and ridiculous. The very meanness of his nature is his safeguard, and after his detection the consolations of his philosophy are most characteristic:

Yet am I thankful, if my heart were great,  
'Twould burst at this; captain I'll be no more;  
But I will eat and drink, and sleep as soft  
As captain shall; simply the thing I am  
Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart  
Let him fear this; for it will come to pass  
That every braggart shall be found an ass,

Rust sword! cool blushes! and Parolles, live  
Safest in shame! being fool'd by foolery, thrive!  
There's place and means for every man alive.

### *The Merchant of Venice.*

*The Merchant of Venice* is one of Shakespeare's most perfect works; popular to an extraordinary degree, and calculated to produce the most powerful effect on the stage, and at the same time a wonder of ingenuity and art for the reflecting critic. Shylock, the Jew, is one of the inimitable masterpieces of characterization, which are to be found only in Shakespeare. It is comparatively easy for both poet and player to exhibit a caricature of national sentiments, modes of speaking and gestures; but Shylock is anything but a commonplace Jew; he possesses a strongly-marked and original individuality, though we perceive a light touch of Judaism in everything he says or does. In tranquil moments all that is foreign to the European blood and Christian sentiments is less perceptible, but in passion the national stamp comes out more strongly marked. All these inimitable niceties the finished art of a great actor can alone properly express. Shylock is a man of information; in his own way even a thinker; but he has not discovered the region where human feelings dwell; his morality is founded on disbelief in goodness and magnanimity. The desire to avenge the wrongs and indignities heaped upon his nation is, after avarice, his strongest spring of action.

The hate of Shylock is naturally directed chiefly

against those Christians who are actuated by truly Christian sentiments; a disinterested love of our neighbor seems to him the most unrelenting persecution of the Jews. The letter of the law is his idol; he refuses to lend an ear to the voice of mercy, which, from the mouth of Portia, speaks to him with heavenly eloquence; he insists on rigid and inflexible justice, and at last it recoils on his own head. Thus he becomes a symbol of the general history of his unfortunate nation. The melancholy and self-sacrificing magnanimity of Antonio is affectingly sublime. Like a princely merchant, he is surrounded with a whole train of noble friends, and the contrast which this forms to the selfish cruelty of the usurer was necessary to redeem the honor of human nature. The danger which, almost to the close of the fourth act, hangs over Antonio, and which the imagination is almost afraid to approach, would fill the mind with too painful anxiety, if the poet did not also provide for its recreation and diversion. This is effected in an especial manner by the scenes at Portia's country-seat, which transport the spectator into quite another world. And yet they are closely connected with the main business by the chain of cause and effect; Bassanio's preparations for his courtship are the cause of Antonio's subscribing to the dangerous bond, and Portia again, by the counsel and advice of her uncle, a famous lawyer, effects the safety of her lover's friend.

But the relations of the dramatic composition are admirably observed in yet another respect. The trial between Shylock and Antonio is, indeed, recorded as being a real event; still it must ever remain an unheard-of

and singular case. Shakespeare has therefore associated it with a love intrigue not less extraordinary; the one consequently is rendered natural by means of the other. A rich, beautiful and clever heiress, who can only be won by solving the riddle of the locked caskets, and the foreign princes, who come to try the venture—all this powerfully excites the imagination with the splendor of an olden tale of marvels. The two scenes in which, first the prince of Morocco, in the language of Eastern hyperbole, and then the self-conceited prince of Arragon, make their choice among the caskets, serve merely to raise our curiosity and give employment to our wits; but on the third, where the two lovers stand trembling before the inevitable choice, which in one moment must unite or separate them forever, Shakespeare has lavished all the charms of feeling, all the magic of poesy. We share in the rapture of Portia and Bassanio at the fortunate choice; we easily conceive why they are so fond of each other, for they are both most deserving of love.

The judgment scene, with which the fourth act is occupied, is in itself a perfect drama, concentrating in itself the interest of the whole. The knot is now untied, and, according to the common ideas of theatrical satisfaction, the curtain ought to drop. But the poet was unwilling to dismiss his audience with the gloomy impressions which Antonio's acquittal, effected with so much difficulty and contrary to all expectations, and the condemnation of Shylock were calculated to leave behind them; he has therefore added the fifth act by way of a musical afterlude in the piece itself. The episode of Jessica, the fugitive daughter of the Jew, in whom

Shakespeare has contrived to throw a veil of sweetness over the national features, and the artifice by which Portia and her companion are enabled to rally their newly-married husbands, supply him with the necessary materials. The scene opens with a playful prattling of two lovers in a summer evening; it is followed by soft music, and a rapturous eulogy on this powerful disposer of the human mind and the world; the principal characters then make their appearance, and after a simulated quarrel, which is gracefully maintained, the whole ends with the most exhilarating mirth.

Antonio is one of the most beautiful of Shakespeare's characters. He does not take a very prominent part in the drama; he is a sufferer rather than an actor. We view him, in the outset, rich, liberal, surrounded with friends; yet he is unhappy. He has higher aspirations than those which ordinarily belong to one dependent upon the chances of commerce; and this uncertainty, as we think, produces his unhappiness. He will not acknowledge the forebodings of evil which come across his mind. Ulrici says: "It was the over-great magnitude of his earthly riches, which, although his heart was by no means dependent upon their amount, unconsciously confined the free flight of his soul." It is doubtful whether Shakespeare meant this. He has addressed the reproof of that state of mind to Portia, from the lips of Nerissa:

*Portia.*—By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world.

*Nerissa.*—You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are; and

yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing.

Antonio may say:

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad;

but his reasoning denial of the cause of his sadness is a proof to us that the foreboding of losses—

Enough to press a royal merchant down,

is at the bottom of his sadness. It appears to us a self-delusion, which his secret nature rejects, when he says:

My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,  
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate  
Upon the fortune of this present year:  
Therefore, my merchandise makes me not sad.

When he has given the fatal bond, he has a sort of desperate confidence, which looks very unlike assured belief:

Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it;  
Within these two months, that's a month before  
This bond expires, I do expect return  
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

And, finally, when his calamity has become a real fact, and not a shadowy notion, his deportment shows that his mind has been long familiar with images of ruin:

Give me your hand, Bassanio; fare you well!  
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;



For herein fortune shows herself more kind  
Than is her custom: it is still her use,  
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,  
To view, with hollow eye and wrinkled brow,  
An age of poverty; from which lingering penance  
Of such misery doth she cut me off.

The generosity of Antonio's nature unfitted him for  
a contest with the circumstances amid which his lot was  
cast. The Jew says:

In low simplicity,  
He lends out money gratis.

He himself says:

I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures  
Many that have at times made moan to me.

Bassanio describes him as

The kindest man,  
The best condition'd and unwearied spirit  
In doing courtesies.

To such a spirit, whose "means are in supposition"—  
whose ventures are "squander'd abroad"—the curse of  
the Jew must sometimes have presented itself to his  
own prophetic mind:

This is the fool that lends out money gratis.

Antonio and his position are not in harmony. But  
there is something else discordant in Antonio's mind.  
This kind friend, this generous benefactor, this gentle

spirit, this man "unwearied in doing courtesies," can outrage and insult a fellow-creature, because he is of another creed:

*Shylock*.—Fair, sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last;  
You spurn'd me such a day; another time  
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies  
I'll lend you thus much monies.

*Antonio*.—I am as like to call thee so again,  
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee, too.

Was it without an object that Shakespeare made this man, so entitled to command our affections and our sympathy, act so unworthy a part, and not be ashamed of the act? Most assuredly the poet did not intend to justify the indignities which were heaped upon Shylock, for in the very strongest way he has made the Jew remember the insult in the progress of his revenge:

Thou call'dst me dog, before thou hadst a cause:  
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs.

Antonio is as much to be pitied for his prejudices as the Jew for his. They had both been nurtured in evil opinions. They had both been surrounded by influences which, more or less, held in subjection their better natures. The honored Christian is as intolerent as the despised Jew. The one habitually pursues with injustice the subjected man that he has been taught to loathe; the other, in the depths of his subtle obstinacy, seizes upon the occasion to destroy the powerful man that he has been compelled to fear. The companions of Antonio exhibit, more or less, the same reflection of

the prejudices which have become to them a second nature. They are not so gross in their prejudices as Launcelot, to whom "the Jew is the very devil incarnate;" but to Lorenzo, who is about to marry his daughter, Shylock is a "faithless Jew." When the unhappy father is bereft of all that constituted the solace of his home, and before he has manifested that spirit of revenge which might well call for indignation and contempt, he is to the gentlemanly Solanio "the villain Jew," and "the dog Jew." When the unhappy man speaks of his daughter's flight, he is met with a brutal jest on the part of Salarino, who, within his own circle, is the pleasantest of men—"I, for my part, knew the tailor that made the wings she flew withal." Note the more delicate traits of character that lie beneath the two great passions of the Jew's heart. Look, for example, at the extraordinary mixture of the personal and the national in his dislike of Antonio. He hates him for his gentle manners:—

How like a fawning publican he looks!

He hates him, "for he is a Christian"—he hates him, for that "he lends out money gratis"—but he hates him more than all, because

He hates our sacred nation.

It is this national feeling which, when carried in a right direction, makes a patriot and a hero, that assumes in Shylock the aspect of a grovelling and fierce personal revenge. He has borne insult and injury "with

a patient shrug;" but ever in small matters he has been seeking retribution:—

I am not bid for love; they flatter me;  
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon  
The prodigal Christian.

The mask is at length thrown off—he has the Christian in his power, and his desire of revenge, mean and ferocious as it is, rises into sublimity, through the unconquerable energy of the oppressed man's willfulness. "I am a Jew; hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and, if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that." He has properly cast the greater portion of the odium which belongs to his actions upon the social circumstances by which he has been hunted into madness. He has been made the thing he is by society. In the extreme wildness of his anger, when he utters the imprecation—"I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my feet, and the ducats in her coffin," the tenderness that belongs to our common humanity, even in its most passionate forgetfulness of the dearest ties, comes across him in the remembrance of the mother of that execrated child:—"Out upon her! Thou torturest me,

Tubal; it was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor."

In the conduct of the trial scene is to be sought the concentration of Shakespeare's leading ideas in the composition of this drama. The merchant stands before the Jew a better and a wiser man than when he called him "dog:"—

I do oppose

My patience to his fury; and am arm'd

To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,

The very tyranny and rage of his.

Misfortune has corrected the influences which, in happier moments, allowed him to forget the gentleness of his nature, and to hear unmerited abuse upon him whose badge was sufferance. The Jew is unchanged. But, if Shakespeare in the early scenes made us entertain some compassion for his wrongs, he has now left him to bear all the indignation which we ought to feel against one "uncapable of pity." But we cannot despise the Jew. His intellectual vigor rises supreme over the mere reasonings by which he is opposed. He defends his own injustice by the example of as great an injustice of every-day occurrence—and no one ventures to answer him:—

You have among you many a purchas'd slave,  
Which, like your asses, and your dogs, and mules,  
You use in abject and in slavish parts,  
Because you bought them:—Shall I say to you,  
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?  
Why sweat they under burthens? Let their beds  
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates  
Be season'd with such viands? You will answer,

The slaves are ours:—So do I answer you.  
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,  
Is dearly bought; 'tis mine, and I will have it:  
If you deny me, fie upon your law!

It would have been exceedingly difficult for the merchant to have escaped from the power of the obdurate man, so strong in the letter of the law, and so resolute to carry it out by the example of his judges in other matters, had not the law been found here, as in most other cases, capable of being bent to the will of its administrators. Had it been the inflexible thing which Shylock required it to be, a greater injustice would have been committed than the Jew had finally himself to suffer. Very truthfully has Mrs. Jameson described the struggle which Portia had to sustain in abandoning the high ground taken in her great address to the Jew:—"She maintains at first a calm self-command, as one sure of carrying her point in the end; yet the painful heart-thrilling uncertainty in which she keeps the whole court, until suspense verges upon agony, is not contrived for effect merely; it is necessary and inevitable. She has two objects in view; to deliver her husband's friend, and to maintain her husband's honor by the discharge of his debt, though paid out of her own wealth ten times over. It is evident that she would rather owe the safety of Antonio to anything rather than the legal quibble with which her cousin Bellario has armed her, and which she reserves as a last resource. Thus all the speeches addressed to Shylock, in the first instance, are either direct or indirect experiments on his temper and feelings. She must be understood, from the beginning

to the end, as examining with intense anxiety the effect of her own words on his mind and countenance; as watching for that relenting spirit which she hopes to awaken either by reason or persuasion."

Had Shylock relented after that most beautiful appeal to his mercy, which Shakespeare has here placed as the exponent of the higher principle upon which all law and right are essentially dependent, the real moral of the drama would have been destroyed. The weight of injuries transmitted to Shylock from his forefathers, and still heaped upon him even by the best of those by whom he was surrounded, was not so easily to become light, and to cease to exasperate his nature. Nor would it have been a true picture of society in the sixteenth century had the poet shown the judges of the Jew wholly magnanimous in granting him the mercy which he denied to the Christian. We certainly do not agree with the duke, in his address to Shylock, that the conditions upon which his life is spared are imposed—

That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit.

Nor do we think that Shakespeare meant to hold up these conditions as anything better than examples of the mode in which the strong are accustomed to deal with the weak. There is still something discordant in this, the real catastrophe of the drama. It could not be otherwise, and yet be true to nature.

But how artistically has the poet restored the balance of pleasurable sensations! Throughout the whole conduct of the play, what may be called its tragic portion, has been relieved by the romance which belongs

to the personal fate of Portia. But, after the great business of the drama is wound up, we fall back upon a repose which is truly refreshing and harmonious. From the lips of Lorenzo and Jessica, as they sit in the "paler day" of an Italian moon, are breathed the lighter strains of the most playful poetry, mingled with the highest flights of the most elevated. Music and the odors of sweet flowers are around them. Happiness is in their hearts. Their thoughts are lifted by the beauties of the earth above the earth. This delicious scene belongs to what is universal and eternal, and takes us far away from these bitter strifes of our social state which are essentially narrow and temporary. And then come the affectionate welcomes, the pretty, pouting contests, and the happy explanations of Portia and Nerissa with Bassanio and Gratiano. Here, again, we are removed into a sphere where the calamities of fortune, and the injustice of man warring against man, may be forgotten. The poor merchant is once more happy; but the "gentle spirit" of Portia is perhaps the happiest, for she has triumphantly concluded a work as religious as her pretended pilgrimage "by holy crosses."

#### **Midsummer Night's Dream.**

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* may be so far compared that in both the influence of a wonderful world of spirits is interwoven with the turmoil of human passions and with the farcical adventures of folly. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is certainly an early production; but *The Tempest*, according to all



*MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.*  
*After an original painting by P. Gervais*

*Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thine amiable cheeks do coy,  
And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy,*

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM,—SHAKESPEARE.





appearance, was written in Shakespeare's later days. Hence, most critics, on the supposition that the poet must have continued to improve with increasing maturity of mind, have honored the latter piece with a marked preference. The internal merit of the two works are, however, about evenly balanced, and a predilection for the one or the other is a matter of personal taste. In profound and original characterization the superiority of *The Tempest* is obvious: as a whole we must always admire the masterly skill which he has here displayed in the economy of his means, and the dexterity with which he has disguised his preparations—the scaffoldings for the wonderful aerial structure.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on the other hand, there flows a luxuriant vein of the noblest and most fantastical invention; the most extraordinary combination of very dissimilar ingredients seems to have been brought about without effect by some ingenious and lucky accident, and the colors are of such clear transparency that we think the whole of the variegated fabric may be blown away with a breath. The fairy world here described resembles those elegant pieces of arabesque, where little genii with butterfly wings rise, half embodied, above the flower-cups. Twilight, moonshine, dew and spring perfumes are the element of these tender spirits; they assist nature in embroidering her carpet with green leaves, many-colored flowers and glittering insects; in the human world they do but make sport childishly and waywardly with their beneficent or noxious influences. Their most violent rage dissolves in good-natured raillery; their passions,

stripped of all earthly matter, are merely an ideal dream. To correspond with this, the love of mortals is painted as a poetical enchantment which, by a contrary enchantment, may be immediately suspended and then renewed again. The different parts of the plot; the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, Oberon and Titania's quarrel, the flight of the two pair of lovers, and the theatrical manœuvres of the mechanics, are so lightly and happily interwoven that they seem necessary to each other for the formation of a whole.

Oberon is desirous of relieving the lovers from their perplexities, but greatly adds to them through the mistake of his minister, till he at last comes really to the aid of their fruitless amorous pain, their inconstancy and jealousy, and restores fidelity to its old rights. The extremes of fanciful and vulgar are united when the enchanted Titania awakes and falls in love with a coarse mechanic with an ass's head, who represents, or rather disfigures, the part of a tragical lover. The droll wonder of Bottom's transformation is merely the translation of a metaphor in its literal sense; but in his behavior during the tender homage of the Fairy Queen we have an amusing proof how much the consciousness of such a head-dress heightens the effect of his usual folly. Theseus and Hippolyta are, as it were, a splendid frame for the picture; they take no part in the action, but surround it with a stately pomp. The discourse of the hero and his Amazon, as they course through the forest with their noisy hunting-train, works upon the imagination like the fresh breath of morning, before which the shapes of night disappear. *Pyramus and Thisbe* is not

unmeaningly chosen as the grotesque play within the play; it is exactly like the pathetic part of the piece, a secret meeting of two lovers in the forest, and their separation by an unfortunate accident, and closes the whole with the most amusing parody.

"I am convinced," says Coleridge, "that Shakespeare availed himself of the title of this play in his own mind, and worked upon it as a dream throughout." The poet, in fact, says so in express words:

If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this (and all is mended),  
That you have but slumber'd here,  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,  
No more yielding but a dream,  
Gentles, do not reprehend.

But to understand this dream—to have all its gay and soft and harmonious colors impressed upon the vision, to hear all the golden cadences of its poesy, to feel the perfect congruity of all its parts, and thus to receive it as a truth, we must not suppose that it will enter the mind amidst the lethargic slumbers of the imagination. We must receive it

As youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream.

No one need expect that the beautiful influences of this drama can be truly felt when he is under the subjection of the literal and prosaic parts of our nature; or, if he habitually refuses to believe that there are

higher and purer regions of thought than are supplied by the physical realities of the world. If so, he will have a false standard by which to judge of this, and of all other high poetry—such a standard as that of the acute and learned critic, Dr. Johnson, who lived in a prosaic age, and fostered in this particular the ignorance by which he was surrounded. He cannot himself appreciate the merits of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "Wild and fantastical as this play is, all the parts in their various modes are well written, and give the kind of pleasure which the author designed. Fairies, in his time, were much in fashion; common tradition had made them familiar, and Spenser's poem had made them great." And thus old Pepys, with his honest hatred of poetry: "To the King's theatre, where we saw *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life."

Hallam accounts *A Midsummer Night's Dream* poetical more than dramatic; "yet rather so, because the indescribable profusion of imaginative poetry in this play overpowers our senses, till we can hardly observe anything else, than from any deficiency of dramatic excellence. For, in reality, the structure of the fable, consisting as it does of three, if not four, actions, very distinct in their subjects and personages, yet wrought into each other without effort or confusion, displays the skill, or rather instinctive felicity, of Shakespeare, as much as in any play he has written."

Hazlitt has thus described its failure as an acting drama in his own day: "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*,



when acted, is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime. All that is finest in the play is lost in the representation. The spectacle is grand, but the spirit has evaporated, the genius has fled. Poetry and the stage do not agree well together. The attempt to reconcile them in this instance fails not only of effect, but of decorum. The ideal can have no place upon the stage, which is a picture without perspective; everything there is in the foreground. That which was merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality. Where all is left to the imagination, as is the case in reading, every circumstance, near or remote, has an equal chance of being kept in mind; but the imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the actual impressions of the senses. Any offense given to the eye is not to be got rid of by explanation. Thus Bottom's head in the play is a fantastic illusion, produced by magic spells; on the stage it is an ass's head, and nothing more; certainly a very strange costume for a gentleman to appear in. Fancy cannot be embodied any more than a simile can be painted; and it is as idle to attempt it as to personate moonshine."

#### *The Taming of the Shrew.*

*The Taming of the Shrew* has the air of an Italian comedy; and, indeed, the love intrigue, which constitutes the main part of it, is derived from a play of Ariosto. The characters and passions are lightly sketched; the intrigue is introduced without much preparation, and in its rapid progress impeded by no diffi-

culties; while, in the manner in which Petruchio, though previously cautioned as to Katherine, still encounters the risks in marrying her and contrives to tame her, the character and peculiar humor of the English are distinctly visible. The colors are laid on somewhat coarsely, but the ground is good. That the obstinacy of a young and untamed girl, possessed of none of the attractions of her sex, and neither supported by bodily nor mental strength, must soon yield to the rougher and more capricious but assumed self-will of a man; such a lesson can be taught on the stage with all the perspicuity of a proverb.

The prelude is more remarkable than the play itself—a drunken tinker, removed in his sleep to a palace, where he is deceived into the belief that he is a nobleman. The invention, however, is not Shakespeare's. Holberg has handled the same subject in a masterly manner, and with inimitable truth; but he has spun it out to five acts, for which such material is hardly sufficient. He probably took the hint from a popular story, for there are several comic motives of this description, which go back to a very remote age, without ever becoming antiquated. Here, as usual, Shakespeare has proved himself a great poet; the whole is merely a slight sketch, but in elegance and delicate propriety it can hardly be excelled. Neither has he overlooked the irony which the subject naturally suggested; the great lord, who is driven by idleness and ennui to deceive a poor drunkard, can make no better use of his situation than the latter, who every moment relapses into his vulgar habits.

The play was first published in 1598, as a "wittie and

pleasaunte comedie," called the *Taminge of the Shrewe*, later editions in 1607-8 showing many alterations. By some critics it is held that Shakespeare had little to do with any of the scenes in which Katherine and Petruchio are not engaged. It is, indeed, altogether probable that the comedy is a version of another and earlier play called the *Taming of a Shrew*, acted some four years earlier. There is a prelude to both, and in both the incidents are the same, except that in the earlier piece Sly, the drunkard, remains throughout the performance, and is finally carried back to the ale-house door in a condition of sleep. Yet this old-time favorite of the comic stage, as included among the works of the great dramatist, bears the true Shakespearean stamp, and as certainly belongs to him as anything that bears his name.

This was an age when such taming as Katherine received was not considered as barbarous. Men were tamed by the axe and the fagot; children by the rod and the schoolmaster's ferrule, and husbands thought that the taming of women, after the fashion of Petruchio, by oaths and starvation, was altogether commendable. Such discipline as that which subdued "Kate the curst" was considered necessary more than a century later, when we find in the *Tatler* a story of a gentleman with a daughter so imperious in temper that she could only be reclaimed by the Petruchio recipe of "taking a woman down in her wedding shoes." Now that Petruchian methods are no longer considered orthodox, we are none the less indebted to him who has exhibited with so much spirit the secrets of the taming school, for has not Shakespeare found "a soul of goodness in things evil?"



incompatible with the hurried movement of dramatic action. It is in her worst mood that Petruchio woos her; and certainly he does it with sufficient assurance, for with his imperturbable spirit and his daring mixture of reality and jest he subdues her at the first interview:

Setting all this chat aside,  
Thus in plain terms:—Your father hath consented  
That you shall be my wife; your dowry 'greed on;  
And will you, nill you, I will marry you.

Katherine denounces him as

A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack.

But this Petruchio heeds not:

We have 'greed so well together,  
That upon Sunday is the wedding-day.

Katherine rejoins:

I'll see thee hang'd on Sunday first.

Nevertheless, the betrothment proceeds, and is accepted by Katherine, as is shown, when, on the appointed day, Petruchio has not appeared:

Now must the world point at poor Katherine,  
And say—Lo! there is mad Petruchio's wife,  
If it would please him come and marry her.

Her pride is touched in the right direction; the taming is already begun; presently Petruchio arrives. The scene in the church is in Shakespeare's happiest style.

As to the character of Petruchio, Hazlitt justly observes: "He is a madman in his senses; a very honest fellow, who speaks hardly a word of truth, and succeeds in all his tricks and impostures. He acts his assumed character to the life, with the most fantastical extravagance, with complete presence of mind, with untired animal spirits, and without a particle of ill humor from beginning to end."

### *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

The first edition of this play, in which are continued the comic parts of Henry IV, was published in 1602; but the comedy, as now it stands, first appeared in the folio of 1623, with nearly twice the number of lines. Between the two editions there is, indeed, little in common, save that the succession of scenes is, with one exception, the same. The speeches in the later copy are greatly elaborated and improved, as also are the characters, to which new and distinctive features are given. The Slender, for example, of the folio is one of the best of Shakespeare's minor characters, while in the earlier version it is a very inferior conception, being worked up from the first rough sketch with touches as delicate as they are powerful. Again, the Justice Shallow of the first copy has lost many of the characteristics which identify him with the Shallow of Henry IV, all of which are reproduced in the folio. The inferiority of the edition of 1602 may in part be accounted for by the fact that the play, as then published, was written in fourteen days, by order of Queen Elizabeth, who de-

sired Falstaff to be exhibited as in love, since all the pleasantry he could afford in any other situation had been exhausted. In love, properly speaking, Falstaff could not be; but for other purposes he could pretend to be so, or at all events imagine that he was the object of love. In the present piece, accordingly, he pays his court, as a favored knight, to two married ladies, who lay their heads together and agree to listen apparently to his addresses, for the sake of making him the butt of their ridicule. The whole plan of the intrigue is therefore derived from the ordinary circle of comedy, but yet richly and artificially interwoven with another love affair. The circumstance which has been so much admired in Molière's *School of Women*, that a jealous individual should be made the confidant of his rival's progress, had previously been introduced into *The Merry Wives*, and certainly with much more probability. It was not, however, the original invention of Shakespeare; it is one of those circumstances which must almost be considered as part of the common stock of comedy, and everything depends on the delicacy and humor with which it is used. That Falstaff should fall so repeatedly into the snare, gives us a less favorable opinion of his shrewdness than his antecedents had led us to form; still, it will not be thought remarkable, if once we admit the probability of the first infatuation, on which the whole piece is founded—that he believes himself qualified to inspire a passion. This leads him, notwithstanding his age, his corpulency, and his dislike of personal inconveniences and dangers, to venture on an enterprise which requires the boldness and activity of youth; and

the situations occasioned by this infatuation are droll beyond all description.

Of all Shakespeare's plays, this approaches the nearest to the species of pure comedy; it is exclusively confined to the English manners of the day, and to the domestic relations. But it was a point of principle with Shakespeare to make none of his compositions a mere imitation of the prosaic world, and thus to strip them of all poetical decoration; accordingly, he has elevated the conclusion by a wonderful intermixture. A popular superstition is made the means of a fanciful mystification of Falstaff. Disguised as the ghost of a hunter who, with ragged horns, wanders about the woods of Windsor, he is to wait for his frolicsome mistress; in this plight he is surprised by a chorus of boys and girls disguised as fairies, who, agreeably to the popular belief, are holding their midnight dances, and who sing a merry song as they pinch and torture him. This is the last affront put upon poor Falstaff, and with this contrivance the conclusion of the second love affair is made in a most ingenious manner to depend.

The critics have been singularly well disposed toward this comedy. Wharton calls it "the most complete specimen of Shakespeare's comic powers." Johnson says, "This comedy is remarkable for the variety and number of its personages, who exhibit more characters appropriated and discriminated than perhaps can be found in any other play." Schlegel is of opinion that it is Shakespeare's nearest approach to pure comedy, untinctured with tragedy or romance. Yet, of those qualities which put Shakespeare above all other men,

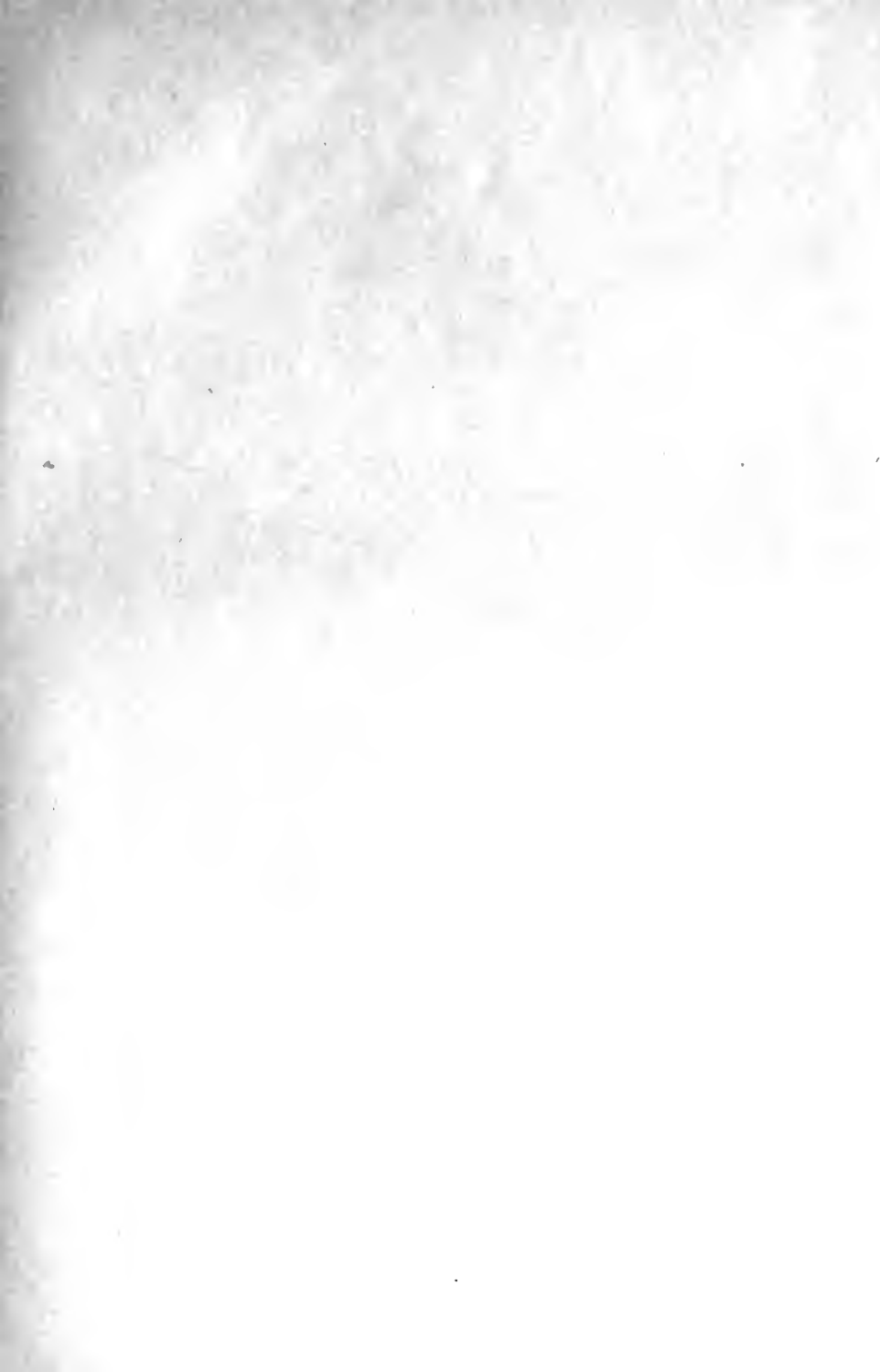


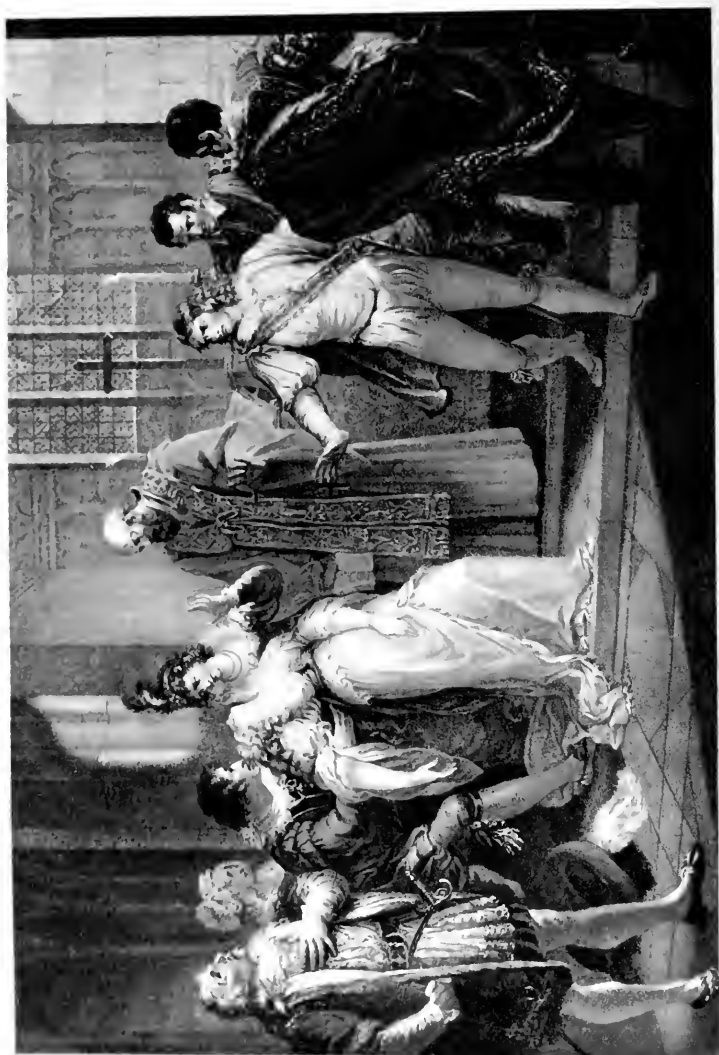
*The Merry Wives* exhibits few traces. Some touches, indeed, such as no other hand could give, there are in Slender, and perhaps in Quickly, as where the former says, "If I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God;" and of Quickly, "His worst fault is that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way. The boy never need to understand anything, for it's not good that children should know any wickedness."

The principal action of this comedy—the adventures of Falstaff with the merry wives—sweeps on with a rapidity of movement which hurries us forward to the dénouement. No reverses, no disgraces, can save Falstaff from his final humiliation. The net is around him, but he does not see the meshes; he fancies himself the deceiver, but he is the deceived. He will stare Ford "out of his wits," he will "awe him with his cudgel;" yet he lives "to be carried in a basket, like a barrow of butcher's offal; and to be thrown in the Thames." But his confidence is undaunted: "I will be thrown into Etna, as I have been thrown into Thames, ere I will leave her;" yet, "since I plucked geese, played truant, and whipped top, I knew not what it was to be beaten, till lately." Lastly, he will rush upon a third adventure: "This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers;" yet his good luck ends in "I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass." The real jealousy of Ford most skillfully helps on the merry devices of his wife; and with equal skill does the poet make him throw away his jealousy and assist in the last plot against the "unclean knight." The misadventures of

Falstaff are most agreeably varied. The disguise of the old woman of Brentford puts him altogether in a different situation to his suffocation in the buck-basket, and the fairy machinery of Herne's Oak carries the catastrophe out of the region of comedy into that of romance. And to the sphere of romance the *Merry Wives* certainly in part belongs, though it is not the high-flown romance of the middle ages—the armored knights and beauteous damsels of which the German school loved so well to write.

The movement of the principal action is beautifully contrasted with the occasional repose of the other scenes. The Windsor of the time of Elizabeth is presented to us as a quiet country town sleeping under the shadow of its neighbor, the castle. Amidst its gabled houses, separated by pretty gardens, from which the elm and the chestnut and the lime throw their branches across the unpaved road, we find a goodly company, with little to do but gossip and laugh and make sport out of each other's cholers and weaknesses. We see Master Page training his "fallow greyhound," and we go with Master Ford "a-birding." We listen to the "pribbles and prabbles" of Sir Hugh Evans and Justice Shallow with a quiet satisfaction; for they talk as unartificial men ordinarily talk, without much wisdom, but with good temper and sincerity. We find ourselves in the days of ancient hospitality, when men could make their fellows welcome without ostentatious display, and half a dozen neighbors "could drink down all unkindness" over "a hot venison pasty." The more busy inhabitants of the town have time to tattle and to





LEON.—*Hath no man's dagger here a point for me ?*

BEAT.—*Why, how now, cousin : wherefore sink you  
dozen ?*

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.—SHAKESPEARE.

*MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*

*After an original painting by William Hamilton*

laugh and be laughed at. It is a charming picture of merry England in the olden times, and sets us longing for even a passing touch of its simple life.

### *Much Ado About Nothing.*

The main plot in *Much Ado About Nothing* is the same as the story of *Ariodante and Ginevra* in Ariosto; but the secondary circumstances and development are very different. The mode in which the innocent Hero before the altar at the moment of the wedding, and in the presence of her family and many witnesses, is put to shame by a most degrading charge, false indeed, yet clothed with every appearance of truth, is a grand piece of theatrical effect in the true and justifiable sense. The impression would have been too tragical had not Shakespeare carefully softened it in order to prepare for a fortunate catastrophe. The discovery of the plot against Hero has been already partly made, though not by the persons interested; and the poet has contrived, by means of the blundering simplicity of a couple of constables and watchmen, to convert the arrest and examination of the guilty individuals into scenes full of the most delightful amusement. There is also a second piece of theatrical effect not inferior to the first, where Claudio, now convinced of his error, and in obedience to the penance laid on his fault, thinking to give his hand to a relation of his injured bride, whom he supposes dead, discovers on her unmasking, Hero herself. The extraordinary success of this play in Shakespeare's own time, and long afterward, is, however, to be

ascribed more particularly to the parts of Benedick and Beatrice, two fun-loving cynics, who incessantly attack each other with all the resources of raillery. Avowed rebels to love, they are both entangled in its net by a merry plot of their friends to make them believe that each is the object of the secret passion of the other. Objection has been made to the same artifice being twice used in entrapping them; the drollery, however, lies in the very symmetry of the deception. Their friends attribute the whole effect to their own device; but the exclusive direction of their raillery against each other is in itself a proof of a growing inclination. Their wit and vivacity does not even abandon them in the avowal of love; and their behavior only assumes a serious appearance for the purpose of defending the slandered Hero. This is exceedingly well imagined; the lovers of jesting must fix a point beyond which they are not to indulge their humor, if they would not be mistaken for buffoons by trade.

*Much Ado About Nothing* was first printed and acted in 1600, this edition not being divided into acts, as in the folio. The variations in the text are, however, extremely light, the folio being evidently printed from the playhouse copy. Ariosto had made of this story a tale of chivalry; Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, a lesson of high and solemn morality; Bandello an interesting love-romance. It remained for Shakespeare to surround the main incidents with those accessories which he could nowhere borrow, and to make of it such a comedy as no other man had made—a comedy not of manners or of sentiment, but of life viewed under its



profoundest aspects, whether of the grave or the ludicrous.

This play was also acted under the title of *Benedick and Beatrice*; for these characters absorb most of the acting interest. But they cannot be separated from it without being liable to misconstruction. The character of Beatrice cannot be properly understood, except in connection with the injuries done to Hero, and it is in this relation that she appears in her real character and no longer under a mask. The poet Campbell has pronounced her "an odious woman;" for she is not at heart what at first she seems to be—a jesting, jibing, sarcastic young woman, one who has no faith in valor, and is not minded to be subdued by courtesy; who prefers a "skirmish of wit" to "making account of her life to a clod of wayward marl." This is not the real Beatrice, who is in fact a high-spirited, imaginative girl, one who, with all her wit, has an abundance of womanly sensibility, and is by no means in a gay humor when she says, "I may sit in a corner and cry heigh ho! for a husband." While seated in

The bleached bower,  
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,  
Forbid the sun to enter,

without any outburst of passion she hears her cousin say of her—

Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,  
Misprising what they look on; and her wit  
Values itself so highly that to her  
All matter else seems weak; she cannot love,  
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,  
She is so self-endear'd.

And why is she so calm under this bitter reproach? Why does she show no resentment against her cousin for this cruel representation? It is because she knows she has been playfully wearing a mask to hide the real strength of her sympathies. But now,

Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!

She is no longer a thing of mere negations, a fashionable, brilliant woman of the world. It is hard to believe that it is the same Beatrice we encounter, who, when her cousin's wedding "looks not like a nuptial," and poor innocent Hero is deserted by lover and father, alone has the courage to say—

Oh! on my soul, my cousin is belied!

It is the injury done to Hero which wrings from Beatrice the avowal of her love for Benedick, and it is surely no reproach to her that she would have her lover peril his life against the false accuser of her cousin. She has thrown off her maidenly disguise, and the earnestness of her soul will now have vent. The conventional Beatrice is now the actual Beatrice, and the same process is repeated in the character of Benedick. When he asks, "Would you have me speak after my custom as being a professed tyrant to the sex?" and when Beatrice says, "I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow, than a man swear he loves me," each knows that the other is acting, and each is in the other's thoughts. It is but a playful echo of the past when Benedick says, "I take thee for pity" and Beatrice "yields upon great persuasion."

## V.

### Shakespeare's Later Comedies.

Three of Shakespeare's comedies were written in the full maturity of his powers, in the years when he composed *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Lear*. This was between 1601 and 1607, when *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure* were produced. Comedy and tragedy were written alternately, perhaps simultaneously, while he was burdened with the management of his theatre and the cares of a player's life, yet there are no traces of hasty or ill-considered workmanship.

#### *As You Like It.*

Of all Shakespeare's comedies, none are more frequently acted nor more widely read than *As You Like It*. Yet it lacks the sparkling wit of *Much Ado About Nothing*, the luxuriance of fancy that beautifies *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the grandeur of poetical creation found in *The Tempest*. Its attraction lies perhaps in the fact that in no other play do we find the grace and imagination of Shakespeare's youth so mingled with the thoughtfulness of his maturer years.

The philosophic melancholy of Jaques discloses much of the troublesome experience that enriched his creator's mind between his thirty-seventh and forty-third years. Jaques may be Shakespeare's first type of "the censurer of mankind," but he is precisely the reverse of the character which the poet would have chosen had he intended the censure to be universally true and not individually characteristic. Jaques is strikingly a character of inconsistencies, one, as Ulrici expresses it, "of witty sentimentality and merry sadness." Nothing can be more beautiful than the delineation, but it is not necessary to suppose it is the result of the poet's self-consciousness. We are induced to believe that Shakespeare's unbounded charity made him feel that there was a chance of Jaques being held somewhat too much of an authority, and that he in consequence made the duke reprove him when he says:

Invest me in my motley; give me leave  
To speak my mind, and I will through and through  
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,  
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

*Duke S.*—Fie on thee! I can tell what thou wouldst do.

*Jaques.*—What, for a counter, would I do but good?

*Duke S.*—Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin:

For thou thyself hast been a libertine,  
As sensual as the brutish sting itself;  
And all the embossed sores, and headed evils,  
That thou with license of free foot hast caught,  
Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world.

Touchstone introduces himself with a bit of fool's logic—a comment upon human actions, derived from

premises that are either above or below ordinary reasonings. He is a faithful follower of Celia, and shares her affection for Rosalind. He has accompanied them to the forest, where he philosophizes in simple terms:

Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I; when I was at home I was in a better place; but travellers must be content.

And then he goes on to laugh at romance in a land of romance; but next we hear of him growing "deep-contemplative" over his dial:

Thus we may see how the world wags;  
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine;  
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;  
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,  
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,  
And thereby hangs a tale.

The fool's manners are changing. He did not talk thus in the court. He is now a sage:

*Cor.*—And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?

*Touchstone.*—Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life it is naught. In respect that it is solitary I like it very well; but in respect that it is private it is a very vile life. Now, in respect it is in the fields it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humor well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach. Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?

The fool has lived apart from human sympathies. He has been a thing to make idle people laugh; to live in

himself alone; to be in the world and not of the world; to be licensed and despised; to have no responsibilities. The fool goes out of the social state in which he has moved, and he becomes a human being. His affections are called forth in a natural condition of society; he is restored to his fellow-creatures, a man, and not a fool. Shakespeare did not intend the courtship of Touchstone and Audrey to be a travesty of the romantic passion of Orlando and Rosalind.

### Twelfth Night.

In a manuscript in the British Museum, *Twelfth Night* is thus described by one who witnessed the play as performed before the benchers of the Middle Temple in 1601: "At our feast we had a play called 'Twelve Night, or What You Will,' much like the *Comedy of Errors*, or *Menechmis* in Plautus. A good practice in it is to make the steward believe his lady widowe was in love with him, by counterfayting a letter as from his lady, in generall termes telling him what shee liked best in him, and prescribing his gestures, apparaile, etc., and then when he came to practise, making him believe they tooke him to be mad."

In this play are united the entertainment of an intrigue, contrived with great ingenuity, to a rich fund of comic characters and situations, and the beauteous colors of an ethereal poetry. In most of his plays Shakespeare treats love more as an affair of the imagination than of the heart; but here he has taken particular care to remind us that, in his language, the same word, fancy, signified

both fancy and love. The love of the music-enraptured duke for Olivia is not merely a fancy, but an imagination; Viola appears at first to fall arbitrarily in love with the duke, whom she serves as a page, although she afterward touches the tenderest strings of feeling; the proud Olivia is captivated by the modest and insinuating messenger of the duke, in whom she is far from suspecting a disguised rival, and at last, by a second deception, takes the brother for the sister. To these ideal follies a contrast is formed by the naked absurdities to which the entertaining tricks of the ludicrous persons of the piece give rise, under the pretext, also, of love; the silly and profligate knight's awkward courtship of Olivia, and her declaration of love to Viola; the imagination of the pedantic steward Malvolio, that his mistress is secretly in love with him, which carries him so far that he is at last shut up as a lunatic, and visited by the clown in the dress of a priest. These scenes are admirably conceived, and as significant as they are laughable.

### *Measure for Measure.*

In *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare was compelled, by the nature of the subject, to make his poetry more familiar with criminal justice than is usual with him. All kinds of proceedings connected with the subjects, all sorts of active or passive persons, pass in review before us: the hypocritical Lord Deputy, the compassionate Provost and the hard-hearted hangman; a young man of quality who is to suffer for the seduction of his mistress before marriage, loose wretches brought in by

the police, nay, even a hardened criminal, whom the preparations for his execution cannot awaken out of his callousness. Yet, notwithstanding this agitating truthfulness, how tender and mild is the pervading tone of the picture! The piece does not take its name from punishment; the true significance of the whole is the triumph of mercy over strict justice, no man being himself so free from errors as to be entitled to deal it out to his equals. The most beautiful feature is the character of Isabella, who, on the point of taking the veil, is prevailed upon by sisterly affection to tread again the perplexing ways of the world, while, amid the general corruption, the heavenly purity of her mind is not even stained with one unholy thought; in the humble robes of the novice she is a very angel of light. When the cold and stern Angelo, heretofore of unblemished reputation, whom the duke has commissioned, during his pretended absence, to restrain, by a rigid administration of the laws, the excesses of dissolute immorality, is himself tempted by the virgin charms of Isabella, supplicating for the pardon of her brother Claudio condemned to death for a youthful indiscretion; when at first, in timid and obscure language, he insinuates, but at last impudently avouches his readiness to grant Claudio's life at the sacrifice of her honor; when Isabella repulses his offer with a noble scorn; in her account of the interview to her brother, when the latter at first applauds her conduct, but at length, overcome by the fear of death, strives to persuade her to consent to dishonor—in these masterly scenes Shakespeare has sounded the inmost depths of the human heart.



The interest here reposes altogether on the represented action; curiosity contributes nothing to our delight, for the duke, in the disguise of a monk, is always present to watch over his dangerous representative, to avert every evil which could possibly be apprehended; and we look to him with confidence for a happy result. The duke acts the part of the monk naturally, even to deception; he unites in his person the wisdom of the priest and the prince. Only in his wisdom he is too fond of roundabout ways; his vanity is flattered with acting invisibly like an earthly providence; he takes more pleasure in overhearing his subjects than in governing them in the customary way. As he ultimately extends a free pardon to all the guilty, we do not see how his original purpose, in committing the execution of the laws to other hands, of restoring their strictness, has in any wise been accomplished. The poet might have had in view that, of the numberless slanders of the duke, told him by the petulant Lucio, in ignorance of the person whom he is addressing, those at least which regarded his singularities and whims were not wholly without foundation. It is deserving of remark, that Shakespeare, amid all the rancor of religious parties, takes a delight in painting the condition of a monk, and always represents his influence as beneficial. We find in him none of the black and knavish monks, which an enthusiasm for Protestantism, rather than poetical inspiration, has suggested to some of our modern poets. Shakespeare merely gives his monks an inclination to busy themselves in the affairs of others, after renouncing the world for themselves; with respect, how-

ever, to pious frauds, he does not represent them as very conscientious. Such are the parts acted by the monk in *Romeo and Juliet*, and another in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and even by the duke, whom, contrary to the well-known proverb, the cowl seems really to make a monk.

There are many beautiful scenes and passages in *Measure for Measure*, as, for instance, where the poet rises to one of his highest flights in the well-known lines:

Merciful heaven!  
Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,  
Splitt'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,  
Than the soft myrtle; but man, proud man,  
Dress'd in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,  
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,  
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As make the angels weep.

### Cymbeline.

In *Cymbeline* we have one of the most wonderful and one of the most perfect of Shakespeare's compositions. In it he has combined one of Boccaccio's novels with traditional tales of the ancient Britons reaching back to the times of the first Roman emperors, and he has contrived, by the most gentle transitions, to blend together into one harmonious whole the social manners of the newest times with olden heroic deeds, and even with appearances of the gods. In the character of Imogen no one feature of female excellence is omitted; her chaste tenderness, her softness and her virgin pride, her boundless resignation and her magna-

nimity toward her mistaken husband, by whom she is unjustly persecuted, her adventures in disguise, her apparent death and her recovery, form altogether a picture equally tender and affecting. "Other of Shakespeare's characters," says Mrs. Jameson, "are, as dramatic and poetic conceptions, more striking, more brilliant, more powerful; but of all his women, considered as individuals rather than as heroines, Imogen is the most perfect."

The two princes, Guiderius and Arvirgus, both educated in the wilds, form a noble contrast to Miranda and Perdita. Shakespeare never tires of showing the superiority of the natural over the artificial. As Polyxenes says to Perdita in the *Winter's Tale*—

Nature is made better by no mean,  
But nature makes that mean; so o'er that art  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock;  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race. This is an art  
Which does mend nature, change it rather; but  
The art itself is nature.

With respect to the other plays, the wise and vigorous Belarius, who after long living as a hermit again becomes a hero, is a venerable figure; the Italian Iachimo's ready dissimulation and quick presence of mind are quite suitable to the bold treachery which he plays; Cymbeline, the father of Imogen, and even her husband, Posthumus, during the first half of the piece, are somewhat sacrificed, but this could not be otherwise;

the false and wicked queen is merely an instrument of the plot; she and her stupid son, Cloten, the only comic part of the piece, whose rude arrogance is portrayed with much humor, are, before the conclusion, got rid of by merited punishment. As for the heroical part of the fable, the war between the Romans and Britons, which brings on the dénouement, the poet in the extent of his plan had so little room to spare that he merely endeavors to represent it as a mute procession. But to the last scene, where all the numerous threads of the knot are united, he has again given its full development, that he might collect together into one focus the scattered impressions of the whole. This example and many others are a sufficient refutation of Johnson's assertion that Shakespeare usually hurries over the conclusion of his pieces. Rather does he, from a desire to satisfy the feelings, introduce much that, so far as the understanding of the dénouement requires, might in a strict sense be justly spared. Our modern spectators are far more impatient to see the curtain drop, when there is nothing more to be determined, than those of his day could have been.

Perhaps there is nothing in Shakespeare more beautifully managed, more touching in its romance, than the scene between Imogen and her unknown brothers. The gentleness, the grace, the "grief and patience" of the helpless Fidele, producing at once the deepest reverence and affection in the bold and daring mountaineers, still carry forward the character of Imogen under the same aspects. Belarius has beautifully described the brothers:

They are as gentle  
As zephyrs, blowing below the violet,  
Not wagging his sweet head; and yet, as rough,  
Their royal blood enchain'd, as the rudest wind,  
That by the top doth take the mountain pine  
And make him stoop to the vale.

It was in their gentleness that Imogen found a support for her gentleness; it was in their roughness that the roughness of Cloten met its punishment. Imogen is still saved from the dangers with which craft and violence have surrounded her.

#### *The Winter's Tale.*

*The Winter's Tale* is as appropriately named as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is one of those tales which are peculiarly calculated to beguile the leisure of a long winter evening, and are even attractive and intelligible to childhood. While animated by fervent truth in the delineation of character and passion, and invested with the embellishments of poetry lowering itself, as it were, to the simplicity of the subject, they transport even manhood back to the golden age of imagination. The calculation of probabilities has nothing to do with such wonderful and fleeting adventures when all end at last in universal joy; and, accordingly, Shakespeare has here taken the greatest license of anachronisms and geographical errors. Not to mention other incongruities, he opens a free navigation between Sicily and Bohemia, and makes Giulio Romano the contemporary of the Delphic oracle. The piece divides itself

in some degree into two plays. Leontes becomes suddenly jealous of his royal bosom-friend, Polyxenes, who is on a visit to his court, and makes an attempt on his life, from which Polyxenes only saves himself by a clandestine flight; Hermione, suspected of infidelity, is thrown into prison, and the daughter which she there brings into the world is exposed on a remote coast; the accused queen, declared innocent by the oracle, on learning that her infant son has pined to death on her account, falls down in a swoon, and is mourned as dead by her husband, who becomes sensible, when too late, of his error: all this makes up the three first acts.

The last two acts are separated from the rest by a chasm of sixteen years; but the foregoing tragical catastrophe was only apparent, and this serves to connect the two parts. The princess, who has been exposed on the coast of Polyxenes' kingdom, grows up among low shepherds, but her tender beauty, her noble manners and elevation of sentiment bespeak her descent. The crown prince Florizel, in the course of his hawking, falls in with her and courts her in the disguise of a shepherd; at a rural entertainment Polyxenes discovers their attachment, and breaks out into a violent rage; the two lovers seek refuge from his persecutions at the court of Leontes in Sicily, where the discovery and general reconciliation take place. Lastly, when Leontes beholds, as he imagines, the statue of his lost wife, it descends from the niche: it is the woman herself, the still-living Hermione, who has kept herself so long concealed, and the piece ends with universal rejoicing. Autolycus, the merry peddler and pickpocket, is neces-

sary to complete the rustic feast, which Perdita renders meet for an assemblage of the gods.

### *The Tempest.*

*The Tempest* has little of action or progressive movement; the union of Ferdinand and Miranda is settled at their first interview, and Prospero merely throws apparent obstacles in their way; the shipwrecked band go leisurely about the island; the attempts of Sebastian and Antonio on the life of the king of Naples, and the plot of Caliban and the drunken sailors against Prospero, are nothing but a feint, for we foresee that they will be completely frustrated by the magical skill of the latter; nothing remains, therefore, but the punishment of the guilty by dreadful sights which harrow up their consciences, and then the discovery and final reconciliation. Yet this want of movement is so admirably concealed by the most varied display of the fascinations of poetry, and the exhilaration of mirth, the details of the execution are so very attractive, that it requires no small degree of attention to perceive that the dénouement is, in some degree, anticipated in the exposition. The history of the loves of Ferdinand and Miranda, developed in a few short scenes, is enchantingly beautiful; an affecting union of chivalrous magnanimity on the one part, and on the other of the virgin openness of a heart which, brought up far from the world on an uninhabited island, has never learned to disguise its innocent movements. The wisdom of the princely hermit, Prospero, has a magical and mysterious

air; the disagreeable impression left by the black falsehood of the two usurpers is softened by the honest gossiping of the old and faithful Gonzalo; Trinculo and Stephano, two good-for-nothing drunkards, find a worthy associate in Caliban; and Ariel hovers sweetly over the whole as the personified genius of the wonderful fable.

Caliban has become a by-word as the strange creation of a poetical imagination. A mixture of gnome and savage, half demon, half brute, in his behavior we perceive at once the traces of his native disposition, and the influence of Prospero's education. The latter could only unfold his understanding, without, in the slightest degree, taming his rooted malignity. It is as if the use of reason and human speech were communicated to an ape. In inclination Caliban is malicious, cowardly, false and base; and yet he is essentially different from the vulgar knaves of a civilized world, as portrayed occasionally by Shakespeare. He is rude, but not vulgar; he never falls into the prosaic and low familiarity of his drunken associates, for he is, in his way, a poetical being; he always speaks in verse. He has picked up everything dissonant and thorny in language to compose out of it a vocabulary of his own; and of the whole variety of nature, the hateful, repulsive and deformed, have alone been impressed on his imagination. The magical world of spirits, which the staff of Prospero has assembled on the island, casts merely a faint reflection into his mind, as a ray of light which falls into a dark cave, incapable of communicating to it either heat or illumination, serves merely to set in motion the poison-



ous vapors. The delineation of this monster is throughout consistent and profound, and, notwithstanding its hatefulness, by no means hurtful to our feelings, as the honor of human nature is left untouched.

In the zephyr-like Ariel the image of air is not to be mistaken, his name even bears an allusion to it; as, on the other hand, Caliban signifies the heavy element of earth. Yet they are neither of them simple, allegorical personifications, but beings individually determined. In general we find in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Tempest*, in the magical part of *Macbeth*, and wherever Shakespeare avails himself of the popular belief in the invisible presence of spirits, and the possibility of coming in contact with them, a profound view of the inward life of nature and her mysterious springs, which, it is true, can never be altogether unknown to the genuine poet, as poetry is altogether incompatible with mechanical physics, but which few have possessed in an equal degree with Dante and himself.

The principal characters in *The Tempest* are drawn with remarkable strength. In Prospero we have a delineation of peculiar profundity. He was, once, not altogether a just prince, not thoroughly a just man; but he had the disposition to be both. His soul thirsted after knowledge; his mind sincere in itself, after love; and his fancy, after the secrets of nature; but he forgot, what a prince should least of all forget, that, upon this moving earth, superior acquirements, in order to stand firmly, must be exercised carefully; that the world is full of enemies who can only be subdued by a watchful power and prudence, and that in certain situations

the armor ought never to be put off. Thus it became easy for his nearest relation, his brother, with the help of a powerful neighboring king who could not resist the offered advantage, to depose him from his dukedom. But as the pure morals of the prince, although they were perhaps but lazily exercised in behalf of his subjects, had nevertheless acquired their love, and the usurper did not dare to make an attack on the lives of the fallen, Prospero saved himself, his daughter, and a part of his magical books, upon a desert island. Here he becomes, what, in its highest sense, he had not yet been, a father and prince. His knowledge extends. Nature listens to him, perhaps because he learned to know and love her more inwardly. Zephyr-like spirits, full of a tender, frolicsome humor, and rude, earth-born gnomes, are compelled to serve him. The whole island is full of wonders, but only such as the fancy willingly receives, of sounds and songs, of merry helpers and comical tormentors; and Prospero shows his great human wisdom particularly in the manner with which he, as the spiritual centre, knows how to conduct his intercourse with friends and foes. First, with his daughter. Miranda is his highest, his one, his all; nevertheless there is visible a certain elevation, a solemnity, in his behavior toward her—peculiarities which, even with the deepest love, the severely tried and aged man early assumes. Indeed, much as the pure sense of his daughter must have long cheered him, he deems it good to relate to her now for the first time the history of his earlier sufferings, now that he has mastery over, and the power to punish, his adversaries. The external

miracles of Nature scarcely affect her upon an island where Nature herself has become a wonder, and the wonders become Nature. But for her, even on that account, there are only so many greater wonders in the heart and life of man.

Caliban is a character of the most powerful poetic fancy; and the more the character is investigated the more is our attention rewarded. He is the son of a witch, Sycorax, who, though long since dead, continues to work even from the grave. In her offspring there is a curious mixture of devil, man and beast, descending even to the fish species. He desires evil, not for the sake of evil or from mere wickedness, but because it is piquant, and because he feels himself oppressed. He is convinced that gross injustice has been done him, and thus he does not rightly feel that what he desires may be wicked. He knows perfectly well how powerful Prospero is, whose art may perhaps even subdue his maternal god Setebos, and that he himself is nothing but a slave. Nevertheless, he cannot cease to curse, and he curses with the gusto of a virtuoso in this more than liberal art. Whatever he can find most base and disgusting he surrounds almost artistically with the most inharmonious and hissing words, and then wishes them to fall upon Prospero and his lovely daughter. He knows very well that all this will help him nothing, but that at night he will have "cramps" and "side-stitches," and be "pinched by urchins;" but still he continues to pour out new curses. He has acquired one fixed idea—that the island belonged to his mother, and, consequently, now to himself, the crown prince. The

greatest horrors are pleasant to him, for he feels them only as jests which break the monotony of his slavery. He laments that he had been prevented from completing a frightful sin, and the thought of a murder gives him a real enjoyment, perhaps chiefly on account of the noise and confusion that it would produce.

An eminent critic has aptly remarked: "We find him only laughably horrible, and as a marvellous, though at bottom a feeble monster, highly interesting; for we foresee from the first that none of his threats will be fulfilled.

"Opposed to him stands Ariel, by no means an ethereal, featureless angel, but a real airy and frolicsome spirit, agreeable and open, but also capricious, roguish, and, with his other qualities, somewhat mischievous." When we hear Prospero recite his too modest epilogue, after laying down his enchanted wand, we feel that the magic we have experienced was too charming and mighty not to be enduring.

## VI.

### Shakespeare's Historical Plays.

The tragedies, *Richard III* and *King John*, are hardly inferior to the great masterpieces of tragedy that will be passed in review in the ensuing volume. But for the present purpose they can best be treated in the group of plays that deal with English history. Each in this group has its peculiar excellence, and as a whole they form the only series of the country's dramatized annals worthy to be so considered. With these may also be noticed the Roman plays, which are both tragic and historic, together with *Troilus and Cressida*, *Pericles* and *Timon of Athens*.

### The Roman Plays.

In the three Roman dramas, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Cæsar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the moderation with which Shakespeare excludes foreign appendages and arbitrary suppositions, and yet fully satisfies the wants of the stage, is particularly deserving of admiration. These plays are the very story itself, and under the apparent artlessness of adhering closely to history as he

found it, an uncommon degree of art is concealed in thus reviving the public life of ancient Rome.

### *Coriolanus.*

In *Coriolanus* we have more comic intermixtures than in the other Roman dramas, as the many-headed multitude plays here a considerable part, and when Shakespeare portrays the blind movements of the people in a mass he almost always gives himself up to his merry humor. To the plebeians, whose folly is sufficiently conspicuous already, the original old satirist Menenius is added by way of enlargement. Droll scenes arise of a description altogether peculiar, and which are compatible only with such a political drama; for instance, when Coriolanus, to obtain the consulate, must solicit the lower order of citizens, whom he holds in contempt for their cowardice in war, but cannot so far master his haughty disposition as to assume the customary humility, and yet extorts from them their votes.

The leading idea of *Coriolanus*, the pivot upon which all the action turns, the key to the bitterness of factious hatred which runs through the whole drama, is the contest for power between the patricians and the plebeians. This is a broad principle, assuming various modifications in various states of society, but very slightly varied in its foundations and its results. He that truly works out the exhibition of this principle must paint men, let the scene be the Rome of the first tribunes or the Venice of the last doges. With suitable changes in accessories, the principle stands for the contests be-

tween aristocracy and democracy, in any country or in any age—under a republic or a monarchy. The historical truth and the philosophical principle which Shakespeare has embodied in *Coriolanus* are universal. In his opening scenes Shakespeare throws us at once into the centre of the contending classes of early Rome. We have no description of the nature of the factions; we see them:

*First Citizen.*—You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

*Citizens.*—Resolved, resolved!

*First Citizen.*—First, you know, Caius Marcius is chief enemy to the people.

*Citizens.*—We know't, we know't.

*First Citizen.*—Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price.

*Citizens.*—No more talking on't; let it be done.

The foundation of the violence is misery; its great stimulant is ignorance. The people are famishing for want of corn; they will kill one man, and that will give them corn at their own price; the murder will turn scarcity into plenty.

The scene in the second act, in which Coriolanus stands for the consulship, is among the most remarkable examples of Shakespeare's insight into character. In Plutarch he found a simple fact related without any comment; but in his representation of this fact Shakespeare had to create a character and to make that character act and react upon the character of the people. Coriolanus was by nature extremely proud, and his education, his social position, his individual supremacy,

made him still more so. He lives in a city of factions, and he dislikes, of course, the faction opposed to his order. The people represent the opinions that he dislikes, and he therefore dislikes the people. Yet he has pity and love for humanity, however humble. Coming into contact with the Roman populace to ask for their suffrage, his uppermost thought is "bid them wash their faces and keep their teeth clean." He outwardly despises that vanity of the people which will not reward desert unless it go hand in hand with solicitation. He betrays his contempt for the canvassers, even while he is canvassing:

I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother the people. to earn a dearer estimation of them; 'tis a condition they account gentle; and, since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practice the insinuating nod, and be off to them most counterfeitedly; that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment of some popular man, and give it bountifully to the desirers. Therefore, beseech you, I may be consul.

He is elected, but the people will not abide by their own election. When they are told by the tribunes that they have been treated scornfully, they become the mere tools of their crafty leaders. Coriolanus is insulted, and lashes himself into a fury which well nigh causes him to be hurled from the Tarpeian rock. Finally he is banished; he betakes himself to the Volscians, to make war on his countrymen, and Rome is beleaguered by her vanquished and despised enemies.

The struggle for power among the classes of young Rome ends in the death of the proud patrician by the



swords of those whom he had conquered. The retribution is a fearful one. The silly rabble escape with a terrible fright; Coriolanus loses his home, his glory, his life, for his pride and his revenge.

### Julius Cæsar.

Centuries have rolled on. Rome has seen a constitution which had reconciled the differences of the patricians and the plebeians. The two orders had built a temple to Concord. Rome's power had increased; her territory had extended. In compounding their differences the patricians and the plebeians had appropriated to themselves all the wealth and honors of the state. There was a neglected class that the social system appeared to reject as well as to despise. The aristocratic party was again brought into antagonism with the impoverished and the destitute. Civil war was the natural result. Sulla established a short-lived constitution. The dissolution of the republic was at hand; the struggle was henceforth to be not between classes but individuals. The death of Julius Cæsar was soon followed by the final termination of the contest between the republican and the monarchical principle. Shakespeare saw the grandeur of the crisis, and he seized upon it for one of his lofty expositions of political philosophy. He has treated it as no other poet would have treated it, because he saw the exact relations of the contending principle to the future history of mankind. The death of Cæsar was not his catastrophe, but the death of the Roman republic at Philippi.

In the opening scene of his *Julius Cæsar*, Shakespeare has marked very distinctly the difference between the citizens of this period and of the days of Coriolanus. In the first play they are a turbulent community, without regular occupation; in the second they are "mechanical"—the carpenter or the cobbler. They "make holiday to see Cæsar, and to rejoice in his triumph."

#### Antony and Cleopatra.

The scene is changed. The boldest, perhaps the noblest, of the Roman triumvirs has almost forgotten Rome, and governs the Asiatic world with a magnificence equalled only by the voluptuousness into which he is plunged. In Rome, Octavius Cæsar is supreme, and now the question is, who shall govern the entire world. Thus the history of individuals becomes the history of Rome.

Coleridge pronounces *Antony and Cleopatra* by far the most wonderful of all Shakespeare's historical plays, even comparing it with *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Lear*. Antony is, of course, the Antony of *Julius Cæsar*, not merely the historical Antony, but the dramatic Antony drawn by the same hand. He is the orator that showed dead Cæsar's mantle to the Roman people; he is the soldier that after his triumph over Brutus said: "This was the noblest Roman of them all."

In Antony we observe a mixture of great qualities, weaknesses and vices; violent ambition and ebullitions of magnanimity; we see him now sinking into luxurious

enjoyment and then nobly ashamed of his own aberrations—manning himself to resolutions not unworthy of himself, which are always shipwrecked against the seductions of an artful woman.

The seductive arts of Cleopatra are in no respect veiled over; she is an ambiguous being made up of royal pride, female vanity, luxury, inconstancy and true attachment. Although the mutual passion of herself and Antony is without moral dignity, it still excites our sympathy as an insurmountable fascination; they seem formed for each other, and Cleopatra is as remarkable for her seductive charms as Antony for the splendor of his deeds. As they die for each other, we forgive them for having lived for each other. The open and lavish character of Antony is admirably contrasted with the heartless littleness of Octavius, whom Shakespeare seems to have completely seen through, without allowing himself to be led astray by the fortune and the fame of Augustus.

#### **Timon of Athens.**

*Timon of Athens* and *Troilus and Cressida* are not historical plays; but neither are they tragedies or comedies, and in the selection of their materials from antiquity, they have more affinity with those that deal with Roman than with English history. Of all the works of Shakespeare, *Timon* possesses most of the characters of satire, a laughing satire of parasites and flatterers, and a scathing outburst at the ingratitude of a false world. The story is very simply treated, and is definitely divided into large masses. In the first act we have

the joyous life of Timon, his noble and hospitable extravagance, and round him the throng of suitors of every description; in the second and third acts his embarrassment, and the trial which he is thereby reduced to make of his supposed friends, who all desert him in the hour of need; in the fourth and fifth acts, Timon's flight to the woods, his misanthropical melancholy, and his death. If the poet sides with Timon against the common practice of the world, he is by no means disposed to spare him. Timon was a fool in his generosity; in his discontent he is a madman.

The vanity of wishing to be singular is particularly evident in the incomparable scene where the Cynic Apemantus visits Timon in the wilderness. They have a sort of competition with each other in their trade of misanthropy; the Cynic reproaches the impoverished spendthrift with having been merely driven by necessity to take to the way of living which he himself had long been following of his free choice, and Timon cannot bear the thought of being merely an imitator of the Cynic. It is highly amusing to see the suitors, whom the ruined circumstances of their patron had dispersed, immediately flock to him again when they learn that he has been revisited by fortune. On the other hand, in the speeches of Timon, after he is deceived, all hostile figures of speech are exhausted; it is a dictionary of imprecations.

#### *Troilus and Cressida.*

*Troilus and Cressida* is the only play of Shakespeare which he allowed to be printed without being previously

represented. It seems as if he here wished, without caring for theatrical effect, to satisfy the nicety of his peculiar wit, and the inclination to a certain irony in the characterization. The whole is, in fact, one continued irony of that crown of all heroic tales, the tale of Troy. The contemptible nature of the origin of the Trojan war, the laziness and discord with which it was carried on, so that the siege was made to last ten years, are only placed in clearer light by the noble descriptions, the sage and ingenious maxims with which the work overflows, and the high ideas which the heroes entertain of themselves and each other. Agamemnon's stately behavior, Menelaus' irritation, Nestor's experience, Ulysses' cunning, are all productive of no effect; and when they have at last arranged a single combat between the coarse braggart Ajax and Hector, the latter will not fight in good earnest, as Ajax is his cousin.

In all this let it not be conceived that any indignity was intended to the venerable Homer. Shakespeare had not the *Iliad* before him—which probably he could not read in the original—but the chivalrous romances of the Trojan war as derived from Chaucer, Dares, Phrygius and others. From these sources also he took the love-intrigue of Troilus and Cressida, a story at one time so popular in England that the name of Troilus had become proverbial for faithful and ill-requited love, and Cressida for female falsehood. The name of the agent between them, Pandarus, has even been adopted into the English language to signify those personages who dedicate themselves to similar services for inexperienced persons of both sexes. The endless contrivances

of the courteous Pandarus to bring the two lovers together, who do not stand in need of him—as Cressida requires no seduction—are comic in the extreme. The manner in which this treacherous beauty excites while she refuses, and converts the virgin modesty which she pretends into a means of seductive allurements, is portrayed in colors extremely elegant, though sufficiently voluptuous. Troilus, the pattern of lovers, looks patiently on, while his mistress enters into an intrigue with Diomed. No doubt, he swears that he will be revenged; but notwithstanding his violence in the fight next day, he does no harm to any one, and ends with only high-sounding threats.

#### Historical Dramas.

The ten dramas derived from English history are among the most valuable of Shakespeare's works, and were intended to form a series covering one of the most important periods in the national annals. Eight of these plays, from *Richard the Second* to *Richard the Third*, are linked together in an uninterrupted succession, and embrace a most eventful era of nearly a century in English history. The events portrayed not only follow one another, but they are linked together in the closest and most exact connection; and the cycle of revolts, parties, civil and foreign wars, which began with the deposition of Richard II, ends with the accession of Henry VII. The careless rule of the first of these monarchs, and his injudicious treatment of his own relations, drew upon him the rebellion

of Bolingbroke; his dethronement, however, was, in point of form, altogether unjust, and in no case could Bolingbroke be considered the rightful heir to the crown. This shrewd founder of the house of Lancaster never enjoyed in peace, as Henry IV, the fruits of his usurpation; his turbulent barons, the same who aided him in ascending the throne, allowed him not a moment's repose. On the other hand, he was jealous of the brilliant qualities of his son, and this distrust, more than any really low inclination, induced the prince, that he might avoid every appearance of ambition, to give himself up to dissolute society. These two circumstances form the subject-matter of the two parts of *Henry the Fourth*; the enterprises of the discontented make up the serious elements, and the wild youthful frolics of the heir-apparent supply the comic scenes.

When the warlike prince ascended the throne under the name of Henry V, he was determined to assert his ambiguous title; he considered foreign conquests as the best means of guarding against internal disturbances, and this gave rise to the glorious but fruitless war with France, which Shakespeare has described in *Henry the Fifth*. The early death of this king, the long legal minority of Henry VI, and his perpetual minority in the art of government, brought the greatest troubles on England. The dissensions of the regents, and the consequently wretched administration, occasioned the loss of the French conquests; and there arose a bold candidate for the crown, whose title was indisputable, if the prescription of three governments may not be assumed

to confer legitimacy on usurpation. Such was the origin of the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, which desolated the kingdom for many years, and ended with the victory of the house of York. All this Shakespeare has represented in the three parts of *Henry the Sixth*.

Edward IV shortened his life by excesses, and did not long enjoy the throne purchased at the expense of so many cruel deeds. His brother Richard, who had a great share in the elevation of the house of York, was not contented with the regency, and his ambition paved a way to the throne through treachery and violence; but his gloomy tyranny made him the object of the people's hatred, and at length drew on him the destruction which he merited. He was conquered by a descendant of the royal house unstained by the guilt of the civil wars, and what might seem defective in his title was made good by the merit of freeing his country from a monster. With the accession of Henry VII a new epoch of English history begins; the curse seemed at length to be expiated, and the long series of usurpations, revolts and civil wars, occasioned by the levity with which the second Richard sported away his crown, was not brought to an end.

Such is the evident connection of these eight plays with each other, but they were not composed in chronological order. According to all appearance, the four last were first written; this is certain, indeed, with respect to the three parts of *Henry the Sixth*; and *Richard the Third* is not only from its subject a continuation of these, but is also composed in the same style.



Shakespeare then went back to *Richard the Second*, and with the most careful art connected the second series with the first. The trilogies of the ancients have already given us an example of the possibility of forming a perfect dramatic whole, which shall yet contain allusions to something which goes before and follows it. In like manner most of these plays end with a very definite division in the history; *Richard the Second*, with the murder of that king; the second part of *Henry the Fourth*, with the accession of his son to the throne; *Henry the Fifth*, with the conclusion of peace with France; the first part of *Henry the Sixth*, also, with a treaty of peace; the third, with the murder of Henry, and Edward's elevation to the throne; *Richard the Third*, with his overthrow and death. The first part of *Henry the Fourth* and the second of *Henry the Sixth* are rounded off in a less satisfactory manner. The revolt of the nobles was only half quelled by the overthrow of Percy, and it is therefore continued through the following part. The victory of York at St. Alban's could as little be considered a decisive event, in the war of the two houses. Shakespeare has allowed this dramatic imperfection, if we may so call it, for the sake of advantages of much more importance. The picture of the civil war was too great and too rich in dreadful events for a single drama, and yet the uninterrupted series of events offered no more convenient resting-place. The government of Henry IV might certainly have been comprehended in one piece, but it possesses too little tragical interest and too little historical splendor to be attractive, if handled in a serious manner

throughout; hence Shakespeare has given to the comic characters belonging to the retinue of Prince Henry the freest development, and the half of the space is occupied by this constant interlude between the political events affording, in the deeds of the elderly scapegrace, Falstaff, and his comrades, a superb picture of genuine comedy.

The two other historical plays taken from English history are chronologically separate from this series. King John reigned nearly two centuries before Richard II, and between Richard III and Henry VIII comes the long reign of Henry VII, which Shakespeare passed over as unsusceptible of dramatic treatment. These two plays, however, may in some measure be considered as the prologue and epilogue to the other eight. In *King John* all the political and national motives which play so great a part in the following pieces are already indicated; wars and treaties with France; a usurpation, and the tyrannical actions which it draws after it; the influence of the clergy, and the factions of the nobles. *Henry the Eighth* again shows us the transition to another age; the policy of modern Europe, a refined court-life under a voluptuous monarch; the dangerous situation of favorites, who, after having assisted in effecting the fall of others, are themselves precipitated from power; in a word, despotism under a milder form, but not less unjust and cruel. By the prophecies on the birth of Elizabeth, Shakespeare has in some degree brought his great poem on English history down to his own time, as far at least as such recent events could be discreetly handled. He composed probably his *King*

*John* and *Henry the Eighth* at a later period, as an addition to the others.

### King John.

In *King John* the political and warlike events are dressed out with solemn pomp, for the very reason that they possess but little of true grandeur. The falsehood and selfishness of the monarch speak in the style of a manifesto. Conventional dignity is most indispensable where personal dignity is wanting. The bastard Faulconbridge is the witty interpreter of this language; he ridicules the secret springs of politics, without disapproving them, for he owns that he is endeavoring to make his fortune by similar means, and wishes rather to belong to the deceivers than the deceived, for in his view of the world there is no other choice. His litigation with his brother respecting the succession of his pretended father, by which he effects his acknowledgment at court as natural son of the most chivalrous king of England, Richard Cœur de Lion, forms a very entertaining and original prelude in the play itself.

When, amid so many disguises of real sentiments, and so much insincerity of expression, the poet shows us human nature without a veil, and allows us to take deep views of the inmost recesses of the mind, the impression produced is only the more deep and powerful. The short scene in which John urges Hubert to put out of the way Arthur, his young rival for the possession of the throne, is drawn with the touch of a perfect master; the cautious criminal hardly ventures to say to himself

what he wishes the other to do. The young and amiable prince becomes a sacrifice to unprincipled ambition; his fate excites the warmest sympathy. When Hubert, about to put out his eyes with the hot iron, is softened by his prayers, our compassion would be almost overwhelming, were it not relieved by the winning innocence of Arthur's childish speeches. Constance's maternal despair on her son's imprisonment is also of the highest beauty; and even the last moments of John, an unjust and feeble prince, whom we can neither respect nor admire, are yet so portrayed as to extinguish our displeasure with him and fill us with serious consideration on the deeds and fate of mortals.

#### Richard II.

In *Richard the Second* Shakespeare exhibits a noble, kingly nature, at first obscured by levity and the errors of an unbridled youth, and afterward purified by misfortune and rendered by it more highly and splendidly illustrious. When he has lost the love and reverence of his subjects and is on the point of losing also his throne, he then feels with a bitter enthusiasm the high vocation of the kingly dignity and its transcendental rights, independent of personal merit or changeable institutions. When the earthly crown has fallen from his head, he first appears as a king whose innate nobility no humiliation can annihilate. The political incident of the deposition is sketched with extraordinary knowledge of the world—the ebb of fortune, on the one hand, and on the other, the swelling tide, which carries everything

along with it. Old John of Gaunt is a model of chivalrous honor, and stands there like a pillar of the olden time which he has outlived. His son, Henry IV, was altogether unlike him, and his character is admirably sustained throughout the three pieces in which he appears.

### Henry IV.

The first part of *Henry the Fourth* is particularly brilliant in the serious scenes, from the contrast between two young heroes, Prince Henry and Percy, with the characteristic name of Hotspur. All the amiability and attractiveness is certainly on the side of the prince; however familiar he makes himself with bad company, we can never mistake him for one of them; the ignoble does, indeed, touch, but it does not defile him; and his wildest freaks appear merely as tricks, by which his restless mind sought to burst through the inactivity to which he was constrained; for on the first occasion that wakes him out of his unruly levity he distinguishes himself without effort in the most chivalrous guise. Percy's boisterous valor is not without a mixture of rude manners, arrogance and boyish obstinacy; but these errors, which prepare for him an early death, cannot disfigure the majestic image of his noble youth.

After Percy has departed from the scene, the splendor is, it is true, at an end; there remain none but the subordinate participators in the revolts, who are reduced by Henry IV, more by policy than by warlike achievements. To overcome this dearth of matter, Shakespeare was in the second part obliged to employ

great art, as he never allowed himself to adorn history with more arbitrary embellishments than the dramatic form rendered indispensable. The piece is opened by confused rumors from the field of battle; the powerful impression produced by Percy's fall, whose name and reputation were peculiarly adapted to be the watchword of a bold enterprise, make him in some degree an acting personage after his death. The last acts are occupied with the dying king's remorse of conscience, his uneasiness at the behavior of the prince, and lastly, the clearing up of the misunderstanding between father and son, which make up several most affecting scenes. All this, however, would still be inadequate to fill the stage, if the serious events were not interrupted by a comedy which runs through both parts of the play, which is enriched from time to time with new figures, and which comes to its climax at the conclusion of the whole, namely, when Henry V, immediately after ascending the throne, banishes to a proper distance the companions of his youthful excesses, who had promised to themselves a rich harvest from his kingly favor.

#### *Falstaff.*

Falstaff is the crown of Shakespeare's comic invention. He has, without exhausting himself, continued this character throughout three plays and exhibited him in every variety of situation; the figure is drawn so definitely and individually that even to the mere reader it conveys the clear impression of personal acquaintance. Falstaff is the most agreeable and entertaining

knave that ever was portrayed. His contemptible qualities are not disguised: old, lecherous and dissolute; corpulent beyond measure, and always intent upon indulging his body with eating, drinking and sleeping; constantly in debt, and anything but conscientious in his choice of means by which money is to be raised; a cowardly soldier and a lying braggart; a flatterer of his friends before their face and a satirist behind their backs, and yet we are never disgusted with him. We see that his tender care of himself is without any mixture of malice toward others; he will only not be disturbed in the enjoyment of his sensuality, and this he obtains through the activity of his understanding. Always on the alert, and good-humored, ever ready to crack jokes on others, and to enter into those of which he is himself the subject, so that he justly boasts he is not only witty himself but the cause of wit in others, he is an admirable companion for youthful idleness and levity. Under a helpless exterior he conceals an extremely acute mind; he has always at command some dexterous turn whenever any of his free jokes begin to give displeasure; he is shrewd in his distinctions between those whose favor he has to win and those over whom he may assume a familiar authority.

### Henry V.

King Henry V is manifestly Shakespeare's favorite hero in English history: he paints him as endowed with every chivalrous and kingly virtue; open, sincere, affable, yet, as a sort of reminiscence of his youth, still

disposed to innocent raillery, in the intervals between his perilous and glorious achievements. To represent on the stage his whole history subsequent to his accession to the throne, was attended with great difficulty. The conquests in France were the only distinguished events of his reign; and war is an epic rather than a dramatic subject. Before the battle of Agincourt he paints in the most lively colors the light-minded impatience of the French leaders for the moment of battle, which to them seemed infallibly the moment of victory; on the other hand he describes the uneasiness of the English king and his army in their desperate situation, coupled with their firm determination, if they must fall, at least to fall with honor. He applies this as a general contrast between the French and English national characters; a contrast which betrays a partiality for his own nation, certainly excusable in a poet, especially when he is backed with such a glorious event as the memorable battle in question.

He has surrounded the general events of the war with a fullness of individual, characteristic and sometimes comic features. But all this variety still seemed to the poet insufficient to animate a play of which the subject was a conquest, and nothing but a conquest. He has, therefore, tacked a prologue, or what was then termed a chorus, to the beginning of each act. These prologues, which unite epic pomp and solemnity with lyrical sublimity and solemnity, and among which the description of the two camps before the battle of Agincourt forms a most admirable night-piece, are intended to keep the spectators constantly in mind that







*How say you, madam? Are you now persuaded  
That Talbot is but a shadow of himself?*

HENRY VI.—SHAKESPEARE.

*HENRY VI*

*After an original painting by John Opie, R. A.*

the peculiar grandeur of the actions described cannot be developed on a narrow stage, and that they must, therefore, supply, from their own imaginations, the deficiencies of the representation.

### Henry VI.

The three parts of *Henry the Sixth* were composed much earlier than the preceding pieces. Shakespeare's choice fell first on this period of English history, so full of misery and horrors of every kind, because the pathetic is naturally suitable to a young poet's mind. Careless as to the apparent unconnectedness of contemporary events, he bestows little attention on preparation and development; all the figures follow in rapid succession and announce themselves emphatically for what we ought to take them; from scenes where the effect is sufficiently agitating to form the catastrophe of a less extensive plan, the poet perpetually hurries us on to catastrophes still more dreadful. The first part contains only the organization of the factions of the White and Red Rose, under which ensigns such bloody deeds were afterward perpetrated; the varying results of the war in France principally fill the stage. The wonderful saviour of her country, Joan of Arc, is portrayed by Shakespeare with an Englishman's prejudices; yet he at first leaves it doubtful whether she has not in reality a heavenly mission.

In the second part, the events more particularly prominent are the murder of the honest Protector, Gloster, and its consequences; the death of Cardinal

Beaufort; the parting of the queen from her favorite Suffolk, and his death by the hands of savage pirates; then the insurrection of Jack Cade under an assumed name, and at the instigation of the duke of York. The short scene where Cardinal Beaufort, who is tormented by his conscience on account of the murder of Gloster, is visited on his deathbed by Henry VI, is sublime beyond all praise. The civil war only begins in the second part; in the third it is unfolded in all its destructive fury. The picture becomes gloomier and seems at last to be painted rather with blood than with colors.

### Richard III.

The part of *Richard III* has become highly celebrated from its having been played by great actors, and this has naturally increased the admiration of the piece itself, for many readers of Shakespeare stand in want of good interpreters of the poet to understand him properly. This admiration is well founded, though there seems to be an injustice in considering the three parts of *Henry the Sixth* as of little value compared with *Richard the Third*. These four plays were undoubtedly composed in succession, as is proved by the style and the spirit in the handling of the subject. The last is definitely announced in the one which precedes it, and is also full of references to it; the same views run through the series; in a word, the whole make together a single work. Even the deep characterization of Richard is by no means the exclusive property of the piece which bears his name;

his character is very distinctly drawn in the two last parts of *Henry the Sixth*; nay, even his first speeches lead us already to form the most unfavorable anticipations of his future conduct. He lowers obliquely like a dark thunder-cloud on the horizon, which gradually approaches nearer and nearer, and first pours out the devastating elements with which it is charged when it hangs over the heads of mortals.

Although the last four pieces of the historical series paint later events, yet the plays of *Henry the Fourth* and *Fifth* have, in tone and costume, a much more modern appearance. This is partly owing to the number of comic scenes; for the comic must always be founded not only in national, but also in contemporary manners. Bloody revolutions and devastations of civil war appear to posterity as a relapse into an earlier and more uncultivated condition of society, or they are in reality accompanied by such a relapse into unbridled savageness. As it is peculiar to the heroic poem to paint the races of men in times past as colossal in strength of body and resolution, so in these plays, the voices of a Talbot, a Warwick, a Clifford and others ring on our ears so plainly that we imagine we hear the clanging trumpets of foreign or of civil war.

### Henry VIII.

Shakespeare was as profound as an historian as a poet; when we compare his *Henry the Eighth* with the preceding pieces, we see distinctly that the English nation, during the long, peaceable and economical reign of

Henry VII, had made a sudden transition from the powerful confusion of the middle age, to the tameness of modern times. *Henry the Eighth* has, therefore, somewhat of a prosaic appearance; for Shakespeare, artist-like, adapted himself always to the quality of his materials. If others of his works, both in elevation of fancy and in energy of pathos and character, tower far above this, we have here, on the other hand, occasion to admire his nice powers of discrimination and his perfect knowledge of courts and the world. What tact was requisite to represent before the eyes of the queen subjects of such a delicate nature, and in which she was personally so nearly concerned, without doing violence to the truth! He has unmasked the tyrannical king, and to the intelligent observer exhibited him such as he really was; haughty and obstinate, voluptuous and unfeeling, extravagant in conferring favors and revengeful under the pretext of justice; and yet the picture is so dexterously handled that a daughter might regard it favorably.



RALPH ROISTER DOISTER

BY

NICHOLAS UDALL.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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*RALPH ROISTER DOISTER.*

*MATHEW MERRYGREEKE, his friend.*

*GAIWIN GOODLUCK, London Merchant, affianced to  
Custance.*

*TRISTRAM TRUSTY, his friend.*

*DOBINET DOUGHTIE, Servant to Roister*

*TOM TRUPENIE, Servant to Custance.*

*SYM SURESBY, Servant to Goodluck.*

*HARPAX, and other Musicians in Roister's service.*

*SCRIVENER.*

*DAME CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE, a wealthy Widow.*

*MADGE MUMBLECRUST, her old Nurse.*

<i>TIBET TALKAPACE,</i>	}	<i>Maids of Custance.</i>
<i>ANNOT ALYFACE,</i>		

*SCENE—LONDON.*

Ralph Roister Doister.

This play, termed by the author an "Enterlude," was performed before Queen Mary about the year 1554. It is the first and the best of its period; the characters are real men and women, cleverly and consistently portrayed, and the ingeniously ambiguous love letter is a brilliant example of the author's versatility. It is not a comedy in the strict sense of the word, but, like the "Merry Interludes," which John Heywood wrote, is farcical in motive, character and incident. Though an imitation of Terence, whose plays Udall translated, it is not a servile imitation, and is full of comic situations.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*Mathew Merrygreeke.*—As long liveth the merry man, they say,  
As doth the sorry man, and longer by a day.  
Yet the grasshopper for all his summer piping,  
Starveth in winter with hungry griping,  
Therefore another saw doth men advise,  
That they be together both merry and wise.  
This lesson must I practise, or else ere long,  
With me Mathew Merrygreeke it will be wrong.  
Indeed men so call me, for by him that us bought,  
What ever chance betide, I can take no thought,  
Yet wisdom would that I did my self bethink

Where to be provided this day of meat and drink:  
For know ye that for all this merry note of mine,  
He might pose me now that should ask where I dine.  
My living lieth here and there, of God's grace,  
Sometime with this good man, sometime in that place,  
Sometime Davy Diceplayer, when he hath well cast,  
Keepeth revel rout as long as it will last.  
Sometime I hang on Hankyn Hoddydodies sleeve,  
But this day on Ralph Roister Doister by his leave.  
For truly of all men he is my chief banker  
Both for meat and money, and my chief sheet-anchor.  
For, sooth Roister Doister in that he doth say,  
And require what ye will ye shall have no nay.  
But now of Roister Doister somewhat to express,  
That ye may esteem him after his worthiness,  
In these twenty towns and seek them throughout,  
Is not the like stock, whereon to graft a lout.  
All the day long is he facing and craking  
Of his great acts in fighting and fraymaking:  
But when Roister Doister is put to his proof,  
To keep the Queen's peace is more for his behoof.  
If any woman smile or cast on him an eye,  
Up is he to the hard ears in love by and by,  
And in all the hot haste must she be his wife,  
Else farewell his good days, and farewell his life,  
Maister Raufe Roister Doister is but dead and gone  
Except she on him take some compassion,  
Then chief of counsel, must be Mathew Merrygreeke,  
What if I for marriage to such an one seek?  
Then must I sooth it, what ever it is:  
For what he sayth or doth can not be amiss,  
Hold up his yea and nay, be his own white son,  
Praise and rouse him well, and ye have his heart won,  
For so well liketh he his own fond fashions  
That he taketh pride of false commendations.  
But such sport have I with him as I would not leese,  
Though I should be bound to live on bread and cheese.  
For exalt him, and have him as ye like in deed:  
Yea to hold his finger in a hole for a need.  
I can with a word make him fain or loth,

I can with as much make him pleased or wroth,  
I can when I will make him merry and glad,  
I can when I like make him sorry and sad,  
I can set him in hope and eke in despair,  
I can make him speak rough, and make him speak fair.  
But I marvel I see him not all this same day,  
I will seek him out: But lo! he cometh this way.

## SCENE II.

Roister Doister, Mathew Merrygreeke.

*Roister.*—Come death when thou wilt, I am weary of my life.

*Merry.*—I told you I, we should woo another wife.

*Roister.*—Why did God make me such a goodly person?

*Merry.*—He is in by the weak, we shall have sport anon.

*Roister.*—And where is my trusty friend Mathew Merrygreeke?

*Merry.*—I will make as I saw him not, he doth me seek.

*Roister.*—I have him espied me thinketh, yond is he,

Ho, Mathew Merrygreeke, my friend, a word with thee.

*Merry.*—I will not hear him, but make as I had haste,

Farewell all my good friends, the time away doth waste,

And the tide, they say, tarrieth for no man.

*Roister.*—Thou must with thy good counsel help me if thou can.

*Merry.*—God keep thee worshipful, Maister Roister Doister,

And farewell the lusty Maister Roister Doister.

*Roister.*—I must needs speak with thee a word or twain.

*Merry.*—Within a month or two I will be here again,

Negligence in great affairs ye know may mar all.

*Roister.*—Attend upon me now, and well reward thee I shall.

*Merry.*—I have take my leave, and the tide is well spent.

*Roister.*—I die except thou help, I pray thee be content,

Do thy part well now, and ask what thou wilt,

For without thy aid my matter is all spilt.

*Merry.*—Then to serve your turn I will some pains take,

And let all my own affairs alone for your sake.

*Roister.*—My whole hope and trust resteth only in thee.

*Merry.*—Then can ye not do amiss whatever it be.

*Roister.*—Gramercies Merrygreeke, most bound to thee I am.

*Merry.*—But up with that heart, and speak out like a ram,  
Ye speak like a capon that had the cough now:  
Be of good cheer, anon ye shall do well ynow.

*Roister.*—Upon thy comfort, I will all things well handle.

*Merry.*—So lo, that is a breast to blow out a candle.  
But what is this great matter I would fain know,  
We shall find remedy therefor I trow.  
Do ye lack money? Ye know my old offers,  
Ye have always a key to my purse and coffers.

*Roister.*—I thank thee: had ever man such a friend?

*Merry.*—Ye give unto me: I must needs to you lend.

*Roister.*—Nay, I have money plenty all things to discharge.

*Merry.*—(Aside.) That knew I right well when I made offer  
so large.

*Roister.*—But it is no such matter.

*Merry.*—What is it then?

Are ye in danger of debt to any man?  
If ye be, take no thought nor be not afraid,  
Let them hardly take thought how they shall be paid.

*Roister.*—Tut, I owe naught.

*Merry.*—What then? fear ye imprisonment?

*Roister.*—No.

*Merry.*—What is it? hath any man threatened you to beat?

*Roister.*—What is he that durst have put me in that heat?  
He that beateth me, by his arms, shall well find  
That I will not be far from him nor run behind.

*Merry.*—That thing know all men ever since ye overthrew  
The fellow of the Lion which Hercules slew.  
But what is it then?

*Roister.*—Of love I make my moan.

*Merry.*—Ah, this foolish love, wilt never let us alone?

But because ye were refused the last day,  
Ye said ye would ne'er more be entangled that way:  
"I would meddle no more, since I find all so unkind."

*Roister.*—Yea, but I cannot so put love out of my mind.

*Merry.*—But is your love, tell me first, in any wise,  
In the way of marriage, or of merchandise?  
If it may otherwise than lawful be found,  
Ye get none of my help for an hundred pound.

*Roister.*—No, by my troth, I would have her to my wife.

*Merry.*—Then are ye a good man, and God save your life,  
And what or who is she, with whom ye are in love?

*Roister.*—A woman whom I know not by what means to move.

*Merry.*—Who is it?

*Roister.*—A woman, yonder.

*Merry.*—What is her name?

*Roister.*—Her yonder.

*Merry.*—Who?

*Roister.*—Mistress ah——

*Merry.*—Fie! fie! for shame!

Love ye, and know not whom but “her yonder, a  
woman?”

We shall then get you a wife, I cannot tell when.

*Roister.*—The fair woman that supped with us yesternight—  
And I heard her name twice or thrice, and had it right.

*Merry.*—Yea, ye may see ye ne’er take me to good cheer with  
you;

If ye had, I could have told you her name now.

*Roister.*—I was to blame indeed, but the next time, perchance.  
And she dwelleth in this house.

*Merry.*—What, Christian Custance?

*Roister.*—Except I have her to my wife, I shall run mad.

*Merry.*—Nay, unwise, perhaps; but I warrant you for mad.

*Roister.*—I am utterly dead unless I have my desire.

*Merry.*—Where be the bellows that blew this sudden fire?

*Roister.*—I hear she is worth a thousand pound and more.

*Merry.*—Yea, but learn this one lesson of me afore:

An hundred pound of marriage money doubtless  
Is ever thirty pound sterling, or somewhat less;  
So that her thousand pound, if she be thrifty,

Is more near about two hundred and fifty.  
Howbeit, wooers and widows are never poor.

*Roister*.—Is she a widow? I love her better therefore.

*Merry*.—But I hear she hath made promise to another.

*Roister*.—He shall go without her, if he were my brother.

*Merry*.—I have heard say, I am right well advised,  
That she hath to Gawin Goodluck promised.

*Roister*.—What is that Gawin Goodluck?

*Merry*.—A merchant man.

*Roister*.—Shall he speed afore me? Nay, sir, by sweet *Saint Anne*.

Ah, sir, Backare, quoth Mortimer to his sow,  
I will have her my own self I make God a vow.  
For I tell thee she is worth a thousand pound.

*Merry*.—Yet a fitter wife for your worship might be found.  
Such a goodly man as you might get one with land,  
Besides pounds of gold a thousand and a thousand,  
And a thousand, and a thousand, and a thousand,  
And so to the sum of twenty hundred thousand.  
Your most goodly personage is worthy of no less.

*Roister*.—I am sorry God made me so comely, doubtless,  
For that maketh me everywhere so highly favored,  
And all women on me so enamored.

*Merry*.—Enamored, quoth you? Have ye spied out that?  
Ah, sir, marry, now I see you know what is what.  
Enamored? Marry, sir, say that again;  
But I thought not ye had marked it so plain.

*Roister*.—Yes, everywhere they gaze all upon me and stare.

*Merry*.—Yea, malkin, I warrant you as much as they dare.  
And ye will not believe what they say in the street,  
When your worship passeth by all such as I meet,  
That sometimes I can scarce find what answer to make.  
Who is this? saith one; Sir Launcelot du Lake?  
Who is this? Great Guy of Warwick? saith another.  
No, say I, it is the thirteenth Hercules, brother.  
Who is this? Noble Hector of Troy? saith the third.  
No, but of the same nest, say I, it is a bird.  
Who is this? Great Goliah, Sampson or Colbrande?



No, say I, but it is a Brutus of the Holy Land.  
Who is this? Great Alexander or Charlemagne?  
No, it is the tenth worthy, say I to them again.  
I know not if I said well.

*Roister.*—Yes, for so I am.

*Merry.*—Yea, for there were but nine worthies before **ye came**.

To some others the third Cato I do you call.  
And so well as I can I answer them all.  
Sir, I pray you what lord or great gentleman is this?  
Maister Ralph Roister Doister, dame, say I, I wis.  
O Lord! saith she then, what a goodly man it is;  
Would Christ I had such a husband as he is.  
O Lord! say some, that the sight of his face we lack.  
It is enough for you, say I, to see his back.  
His face is for ladies of high and noble parages,  
With whom he hardly 'scapeth great marriages.  
With much more than this, and much otherwise.

*Roister.*—I can thee thank that thou canst such answers devise;  
But I perceive thou dost me thoroughly know.

*Merry.*—I mark your manners for my own learning, I trow;  
But such is your beauty, and such are your acts,  
Such is your personage, and such are your facts,  
That all women fair and foul, more or less,  
They eye you, they love you, they talk of you, doubtless;  
Your pleasant look maketh them all merry,  
Ye pass not by but they laugh till they be weary;  
Yea, and money could I have, the truth to tell,  
Of many, to bring you that way where they dwell.

*Roister.*—Merrygreeke, for this thy reporting well of me——

*Merry.*—What should I else, sir? It is my duty, pardee.

*Roister.*—I promise thou shalt not lack while I have a groat.

*Merry.*—Faith, sir, and I never had more need of a new coat.

*Roister.*—Thou shalt have one to-morrow, and gold for to spend.

*Merry.*—Then I trust to bring the day to a good end.

For, as for mine own part, having money enow,  
I could live only with the remembrance of you.  
But now to your widow whom you love so hot.

*Roister.*—By cock, thou sayest truth! I had almost forgot.

*Merry*.—What if Christian Custance will not have you, what?

*Roister*.—Have me? yes I warrant you, never doubt of that;  
I know she loveth me, but she dare not speak.

*Merry*.—Indeed, meet it were somebody should it break.

*Roister*.—She looked on me twenty times yesternight,  
And laughed so——

*Merry*.—That she could not sit upright.

*Roister*.—No, faith, could she not.

*Merry*.—No even such a thing I cast.

*Roister*.—But for wooing, thou knowest, women are shamefast.  
But and she knew my mind, I know she would be glad,  
And think it the best chance that ever she had.

*Merry*.—To her then, like a man, and be bold forth to start;  
Wooers never speed well that have a false heart.

*Roister*.—What may I best do?

*Merry*.—Sir, remain ye a while here.

Ere long one or other of her house will appear.  
Ye know my mind.

*Roister*.—Yea, now, hardly let me alone.

*Merry*.—In the meantime, sir, if you please, I will home,  
And call your musicians, for in this your case  
It would set you forth, and all your wooing grace,  
Ye may not lack your instruments to play and sing.

*Roister*.—Thou knowest I can do that.

*Merry*.—As well as anything.

Shall I go call your folks, that ye may show a cast?  
(Specimen.)

*Roister*.—Yea, run, I beseech thee, in all possible haste.

*Merry*.—I go.

*Roister*.—Yea, for I love singing out of measure;  
It comforteth my spirits and doeth me great pleasure.  
But who cometh forth yonder from my sweetheart Custance?  
My matter frameth well; this is a lucky chance.

In the next scene Roister pays court to the serving

maids of Custance, and in the one following that lady receives a love letter from her old nurse Madge.

*Custance*.—Who gave thee this letter, Margerie Mumblecrust?

*Mumbl*.—A lusty gay bachelor gave it me of trust,

And if ye seek him, he will allow your doing.

*Custance*.—Yea, but where learned he that manner of wooing?

*Mumbl*.—If to sue to him you will any pains take,

He will have you to his wife, he saith, for my sake.

*Custance*.—Some wise gentlemen belike. I am bespoken:

And I thought verily this had been some token

From my dear spouse Gawin Goodluck, whom when him  
please

God luckily send home to give both our hearts ease.

*Mumbl*.—A jolly man it is, I wot well by report,

And would have you to him for marriage resort:

Best open the writing, and see what it doth speak.

*Custance*.—At this time, nurse, I will neither read nor break.

*Mumbl*.—He promised to give you a whole peck of goid.

*Custance*.—Perchance lack of a pint when it shall be all told.

*Mumbl*.—I would take a gay, rich husband, if I were you.

*Custance*.—In good sooth, Madge, e'en so would I, if I were thou.

But no more of this fond talk now; let us go in

And see thou no more move me folly to begin.

Nor bring me no more letters for no man's pleasure,

But thou know from whom.

*Mumbl*.—I warrant ye shall be sure.

## ACT II.

Madge discusses the matter with Roister's servant Doughtie.

*Mumblecrust*.—I was ne'er so shook up afore since I was born,

That our mistress could not have chid I would have  
sworn;

And I pray God I die if I meant any harm;  
But for my lifetime this shall be to me a charm.

*Doughtie.*—God you save and see, nurse, and how is it with you?

*Mumbl.*—Marry, a great deal the worse it is for such as thou.

*Dough.*—For me? Why so?

*Mumbl.*—Why, wert not thou one of them, say,  
That sang and played here with the gentleman last day?

*Dough.*—Yes, and he would know if you have for him spoken.  
And prays you to deliver this ring and token.

*Mumbl.*—Now, by the token that God tokened, brother,  
I will deliver no token one nor other.  
I have once been so sent for your master's pleasure,  
As I will not be again for all his treasure.

*Dough.*—He will thank you, woman.

*Mumbl.*—I will none of his thank.

*Dough.*—I ween I am a prophet, this gear will prove blank;  
But why should I home again without answer go?  
It were better go to Rome on my head than so.  
I will tarry here this month, but some of the house  
Shall take it of me, and then I care not a louse.  
But yonder cometh forth a wench or a lad;  
If he have not one Lombard's touch, my luck is bad.

Mistress Custance's servants talk of the affair.

*Trupenie.*—I am clean lost for lack of merry company;  
We agree not half well within, our wenches and I;  
They will command like mistresses, they will forbid;  
If they be not served, Trupeny must be chid.  
Let them be as merry now as ye can desire,  
With turning of a hand our mirth lieth in the mire;  
I cannot skill of such changeable mettle;  
There is nothing with them but in dock, out nettle.

*Dough.*—Whether is it better that I speak to him first,  
Or he first to me, it is good to cast the worst.  
If I begin first, he will smell all my purpose;  
Otherwise I shall not need anything to disclose.

*Trupenie*.—What boy have we yonder? I will see what he is.

*Dough*.—He cometh to me. It is hereabout I wis.

*Trupenie*.—Wouldst thou aught, friend, that thou lookest so about?

*Dough*.—Yea, but whether ye can help me or no I doubt.

I seek one Mistress Custance house here dwelling.

*Trupenie*.—It is my mistress ye seek, too, by your telling.

*Dough*.—Is there any of that name here but she?

*Trupenie*.—Not one in all the whole town that I know, pardee.

*Dough*.—A widow she is, I trow.

*Trupenie*.—And what and she be?

*Dough*.—But ensured to an husband.

*Trupenie*.—Yea, so think we.

*Dough*.—And I dwell with her husband that trusteth to be.

*Trupenie*.—In faith, then must thou needs be welcome to me.

Let us for acquaintance shake hands together,

And whate'er thou be, heartily welcome hither.

*Tib. Talk*.—Well, *Trupenie*, never but flinging. (Running about.)

*An. Alyface*.—And frisking?

*Trupenie*.—Well, *Tibet* and *Annot*, still swinging and whisking?

*Tib. Talk*.—But ye roil abroad.

*An. Alyface*.—In the street everywhere.

*Trupenie*.—Where are ye twain, in chambers, when ye meet me there?

But come hither, fools; I have one now by the hand,

Servant to him that must be our mistress' husband;

Bid him welcome.

*An. Alyface*.—To me truly is he welcome.

*Tib. Talk*.—Forsooth, and as I may say, heartily welcome.

*Dough*.—I thank you, mistress maids.

*An. Alyface*.—I hope we shall better know.

*Tib. Talk*.—And when will our new master come?

*Dough*.—Shortly, I trow.

*Tib. Talk*.—I would it were to-morrow, for till he resort,

Our mistress, being a widow, hath small comfort;  
 And I heard our nurse speak of an husband to-day,  
 Ready for our mistress, a rich man and gay;  
 And we shall go in our French hoods every day,  
 In our silk cassocks, I warrant you, fresh and gay,  
 In our trick ferdegews and billiments of gold,  
 Brave in our suits of change seven double fold.  
 Then shall ye see Tibet, sirs, tread the moss so trim—  
 Nay, who said I tread? Ye shall see her glide and swim,  
 Not lumperde, clumperdee, like our spaniel Rig.

*Trupenic.*—Marry, then, prickmedainty, come toast me a fig.

Who shall then know our Tib. Talk apace, trow ye?

*An. Alyface.*—And why not Annot Alyface as fine as she?

*Trupenic.*—And what had Tom Trupenie—a father or none?

*An. Alyface.*—Then our pretty new-come man will look to be one.

*Trupenic.*—We four, I trust, shall be a jolly, merry knot.

*Tib. Talk.*—Will you now in with us unto our mistress go?

*Dough.*—I have first for my master an errand or two.

But I have here from him a token and a ring;

They shall have most thank of her that first doth it bring.

*Tib. Talk.*—Marry that will I.

*Trupenic.*—See and Tibet snatch not now.

*Tib. Talk.*—And why may not I, sir, get thanks as well as you?

(Exit.)

*An. Alyface.*—Yet get ye not all; we will go with you, both,

And have part of your thanks, be ye never so loth.

(Exeunt.)

*Dough.*—So my hands are rid of it, I care for no more.

I may now return home; so I durst not afore.

Mistress Custance scolds her servants.

*Custance.*—Nay, come forth all three; and come hither, pretty maid:

Will not so many forewarnings make you afraid?

*Tib. Talk.*—Yes, forsooth.

*Custance*.—But still be a runner up and down,  
Still be a bringer of tidings and tokens to town.

*Tib. Talk*.—No, forsooth, mistress.

*Custance*.—Is all your delight and joy  
In whisking and ramping abroad like a tomboy?

*Tib. Talk*.—Forsooth, these were there too, Annot and Trupenie.

*Trupenie*.—Yea, but ye alone took it, ye cannot deny.

*An. Alyface*.—Yea, that ye did.

*Tib. Talk*.—But if I had not, ye twain would.

*Custance*.—You great calf, ye should have more wit, so ye should.

But why should any of you take such things in hand?

*Tib. Talk*.—Because it came from him that must be your husband.

*Custance*.—How do ye know that?

*Tib. Talk*.—Forsooth, the boy did say so.

*Custance*.—What was his name?

*An. Alyface*.—We asked not. He is not yet far gone

*Trupenie*.—I will see.

*Custance*.—If thou canst find him in the street, bring him to me.

*Trupenie*.—Yes.

(Exit.)

*Custance*.—Well, ye naughty girls, if ever I perceive  
That henceforth you do letters or tokens receive,  
To bring unto me from any person or place,  
Except ye first show me the party face to face,  
Either thou or thou, full truly abye thou shalt.

*Tib. Talk*.—Pardon this, and the next time powder me in salt.

*Custance*.—I shall make all girls by you twain to beware.

*Tib. Talk*.—If ever I offend again, do not me spare.

But if ever I see that false boy any more,  
By your mistressship's license I tell you afore,  
I will rather have my coat twenty times swung,  
Than on the naughty wag not to be avenged.

*Custance*.—Good wenches would not so ramp abroad idly,  
But keep within doors and ply their work earnestly.  
If one would speak with me that is a man likely,

Ye shall have right good thank to bring me word quickly.  
 But otherwise with messages to come in post,  
 From henceforth, I promise you, shall be to your cost.  
 Get you in to your work.

*Tib. and An.*—Yes, forsooth.

*Custance.*—Hence both twain,

And let me see you play me such a part again!

(*They go.*)

*Trupenie.*—(*Entering.*) Mistress, I have run past the far end of  
 the street,

Yet can I not yonder crafty boy see nor meet.

*Custance.*—No?

*Trupenie.*—Yet I looked as far beyond the people

As one may see out of the top of Paul's steeple.

*Custance.*—Hence in at doors, and let me no more be vexed.

*Trupenie.*—Forgive me this one fault, and lay on for the next.

*Custance.*—Now will I in, too, for I think, so God me mend,  
 This will prove some foolish matter in the end.

### ACT III.

*Merrygreeke.*—Now say this again: he hath somewhat to do

Who followeth the trace of one that goes to woo,

Specially that hath no more wit in his head

Than my cousin Roister Doister, withal, is led.

I am sent in all haste to espy and to mark

How our letters and tokens are likely to work.

Master Roister Doister must have answer in haste,

For he loveth not to spend much labor in waste.

Now, as for Christian Custance, by this light,

Though she had not her troth to Gawin Goodluck plight,

Yet rather than with such a loutish dolt to marry,

I dare say she would live a poor life solitary;

But fain would I speak with Custance if I wist how

To laugh at the matter. Yond cometh one forth now.

*Tib. Talk.*—(*Entering.*) Ah! that I might but once in my life  
 have a sight



Of him that made us all so ill sent by this light.  
 He should never escape if I had him by the ear;  
 But even from his head I would bite it or tear.  
 Yea, and if one of them were not enow,  
 I would bite them both off, I make God a vow.

*Merry.*—What is he whom this little mouse doth so threaten?

*Tib. Talk.*—I would teach him, I trow, to make girls chid or beaten.

*Merry.*—I will call her. Maid, with whom are ye so hasty?

*Tib. Talk.*—Not with you, sir, but with a little wag-pasty,  
 A deceiver of folks by subtle craft and guile.

*Merry.*—I know where she is: Dobinet hath wrought some wile.

*Tib. Talk.*—He brought a ring and token which he said was sent  
 From our dame's husband; but I wot well I was shent,  
 For it liked her as well, to tell you no lies,  
 As water in her ship, or salt cast in her eyes.  
 And yet whence it came neither we nor she can tell.

*Merry.*—We shall have sport anon; I like this very well.

And dwell ye here with Mistress Custance, fair maid?

*Tib. Talk.*—Yea, marry, do I, sir. What would ye have said?

*Merry.*—A little message unto her by word of mouth.

*Tib. Talk.*—No messages, by your leave, nor tokens, forsooth.

*Merry.*—Then help me to speak with her.

*Tib. Talk.*—With a good will that.

Here she cometh forth. Now speak ye know best what.

*Custance.*—(Entering.) No other life with you, maid, but  
 abroad to skip?

*Tib. Talk.*—Forsooth, here is one would speak with your mistressship.

*Custance.*—Ah! have ye been learning of more messages now?

*Tib. Talk.*—I would not hear his mind, but bade him show it to you.

*Custance.*—Get you indoors.

*Tib. Talk.*—I am gone.

*Merry.*—Dame Custance, God ye save!

*Custance.*—Welcome, friend Merrygreeke; and what thing  
 would ye have?

*Merry.*—I am come to you a little matter to break.

*Custance.*—But see it be honest, else better not to speak.

*Merry.*—How feel ye yourself affected here of late?

*Custance.*—I feel no manner change, but after the old rate.

But whereby do ye mean?

*Merry.*—Concerning marriage.

Doth not love lade you?

*Custance.*—I feel no such burden.

*Merry.*—Do ye feel no pangs of dotage? Answer me right.

*Custance.*—I dote so that I make but one sleep all the night;

But what need all these words?

*Merry.*—Oh, Jesus, will ye see

What dissembling creatures these same women be?

The gentleman ye wot of, whom ye do so love

That ye would fain marry him if ye durst it move,

Among other rich widows, which are of him glad,

Lest ye for losing of him, perchance, might run mad,

Is now contented that upon your suit making,

Ye be as one in election of taking.

*Custance.*—What a tale is this? That I wot of? Whom I love?

*Merry.*—Yea, and he is in loving as warm again as a dove.

E'en of very pity he is willing you to take,

Because ye shall not destroy yourself for his sake.

*Custance.*—Marry, God yield his worship, whatever he be,

It is gentlemanly spoken.

*Merry.*—Is it not, trow ye?

If ye have the grace now to offer yourself, ye speed.

*Custance.*—As much as though I did, this time it shall not need.

But what gentleman is it, I pray you tell me plain,

That wooeth so finely?

*Merry.*—Lo! where ye be again?

As though ye knew him not.

*Custance.*—Tush! ye speak in jest.

*Merry.*—Nay, sure, the party is in good knocking earnest,

And have you he will, he saith, and have you he must.

*Custance.*—I am promised during my life; that is just.

*Merry.*—Marry, so thinketh he, unto him alone.

*Custance*.—No creature hath my faith and troth but one;  
That is Gawin Goodluck; and if it be not he,  
He hath no tittle this way, whatever he be,  
Nor I know none to whom I have such word spoken.

*Merry*.—Ye know him not? you, by his letter and token.

*Custance*.—Indeed, true it is that a letter I have,  
But I never read it yet, as God me save.

*Merry*.—Ye a woman? and your letter so long unread?

*Custance*.—Ye may thereby know what haste I have to wed.  
But now, who it is for my hand I know by guess.

*Merry*.—Ah, well, I say.

*Custance*.—It is Roister Doister, doubtless.

*Merry*.—Will ye never leave this dissimulation?  
Ye know him not.

*Custance*.—But by imagination,  
For no man there is but a very dolt and lout,  
That to woo a widow would so go about.  
He shall never have me his wife while he do live.

*Merry*.—Then will he have you if he may, so mote I thrive,  
And he biddeth you send him word by me  
That ye humbly beseech him ye his wife may be,  
And that there shall be no let in you nor mistrust,  
But to be wedded on Sunday next if he lust,  
And biddeth you to look for him.

*Custance*.—Doth he bid so?

*Merry*.—When he cometh, ask him whether he did or no.

*Custance*.—Go say that I bid him keep him warm at home,  
For if he come abroad, he shall cough me a mome. (A  
fool.)

My mind was vexed, I shrew his head, sottish dolt.

*Merry*.—He hath in his head——

*Custance*.—As much brain as a burbolt.

*Merry*.—Well, Dame Custance, if he hear you thus play chop-  
loge—— (logic.)

*Custance*.—What will he?

*Merry*.—Play the devil in the horologe.

*Custance*.—I defy him, lout!

*Merry.*—Shall I tell him what ye say?

*Custance.*—Yea, and add whatsoever thou canst, I thee pray,  
And I will avouch it, whatsoever it be.

*Merry.*—Then let me alone; we will laugh well, ye shall see.  
It will not be long ere he will hither resort.

*Custance.*—Let him come when he likes, I wish no better sport.  
Fare ye well; I will in and read my great letter.  
I shall to my wooer make answer the better.

## SCENE II.

*Merry.*—Now that the whole answer in my devise doth rest,  
I shall paint out our wooer in colors of the best.  
And all that I say shall be on Custance's mouth:  
She is author of all that I shall speak, forsooth.  
But yonder cometh Roister Doister now in a trance.

*Roister.*—Juno send me this day good luck and good chance.  
I cannot but come see how Merrygreeke doth speed.

*Merry.*—(Aside.) I will not see him, but give him a jut indeed.  
I cry your mastership mercy! (Running against him.)

*Roister.*—And whither now?

*Merry.*—As fast as I could run, sir, in post unto you.  
But why speak ye so faintly, or why are ye so sad?

*Roister.*—Thou knowest the proverb, because I cannot be had.  
Hast thou spoken with this woman?

*Merry.*—Yea, that I have.

*Roister.*—And what will this gear be?

*Merry.*—No, so God save me.

*Roister.*—Hast thou a flat answer?

*Merry.*—Nay, a sharp answer.

*Roister.*—What?

*Merry.*—Ye shall not, she saith, by her will marry her cat.  
Ye are such a calf, such an ass, such a block,  
Such a lilburne, such a hoball, such a lubber,  
And because ye should come to her at no season,  
She despised your worship out of all reason.

Beware what ye say, quoth I, of such a gentman.  
Nay, I fear him not, quoth she, do the best he can.  
He vaunteth himself for a man of prowess great,  
Whereas a good gander, I dare say, may him beat.  
And where he is louted and laughed to scorn  
For the veriest dolt that ever was born,  
And veriest lubber, sloven and beast  
Living in this world from the west to the east;  
Yet of himself hath he such opinion,  
That in all the world is not the like minion.  
He thinks every woman to be brought in dotage  
With the only sight of his goodly personage.  
Yet none that will have him; we do him lout and flock,  
And make him among us our common sporting stock;  
And so would I now, quoth she, save only because  
Better nay, quoth I, I lust not meddle with daws.  
Ye are happy, quoth I, that ye are a woman;  
This would cost you your life in case ye were a man.

*Roister.*—Yea, an hundred thousand pound should not save her life.

*Merry.*—No, but that ye woo her to have her to your wife,  
But I could not stop her mouth.

*Roister.*—Heigh-ho! alas!

*Merry.*—Be of good cheer, man, and let the world pass.

*Roister.*—What shall I do or say, now that it will not be?

*Merry.*—Ye shall have choice of a thousand as good as she.  
And ye must pardon her; it is for lack of wit.

*Roister.*—Yea, for were not I an husband for her fit?  
Well, what should I now do?

*Merry.*—In faith, I cannot tell.

*Roister.*—I will go home and die.

*Merry.*—Then shall I bid toll the bell?

*Roister.*—No.

*Merry.*—God have mercy on your soul, ah, good gentleman,  
That ye should thus die for an unkind woman.  
Will ye drink once ere ye go?

*Roister.*—No, no, I will none.

*Merry.*—How feel your soul to God?

*Roister*.—I am nigh gone.

*Merry*.—And shall we hence straight?

*Roister*.—Yea.

*Merry*.—Placebo dilexi.

Master Roister Doister will straight go home and die.

*Roister*.—Heigh-ho! alas! the pangs of death my heart do break.

*Merry*.—Hold your peace for shame, sir; a dead man may not speak.

Nequando: What mourners and what torches shall we have?

*Roister*.—None.

*Merry*.—Dirige. He will go darkling to his grave,

Neque lux, neque crux, neque mourners, neque clink,

He will steal to heaven unknowing to God, I think.

A porta inferi, who shall your goods possess?

*Roister*.—Thou shalt be my executor, and have all, more and less.

*Merry*.—Requiem æternam. Now, God reward your mastership.

And I will cry halfpenny dole for your worship.

Come forth, sirs; hear the doleful news I shall you tell.

Our good master here will no longer with us dwell,

But in spite of Custance, which hath him wearied,

Let us see his worship solemnly buried.

And while some piece of his soul is yet him within,

Some part of his funeral let us here begin.

All men take heed by this one gentleman,

How you set your love upon an unkind woman.

For these women be all such mad, peevish elves,

They will not be won except it please themselves.

But in faith, Custance, if ever ye come in hell,

Master Roister Doister shall serve you as well.

And will ye needs go from us thus in very deed?

*Roister*.—Yea, in good sadness.

*Merry*.—Now, Jesus Christ be your speed.

Good-night, Roger, old knave; farewell, Roger, old knave;

Good-night, Roger, old knave, knave knap.

Pray for the late Master Roister Doister's soul,

And come forth, parish clerk, let the passing bell toll.  
Pray for your master, sirs, and for him ring a peal.  
He was your right good master while he was in heal.

*Roister.*—Heigh-ho!

*Merry.*—Dead men go not so fast  
In Paradisum.

*Roister.*—Heigh-ho!

*Merry.*—Soft, hear what I have cast——

*Roister.*—I will hear nothing; I am past.

*Merry.*—Whough, wellaway.

Ye may tarry one hour and hear what I shall say.  
Ye were best, sir, for a while to revive again,  
And quit them ere ye go.

*Roister.*—Trowest thou so?

*Merry.*—Yea, plain.

*Roister.*—How may I revive, being now so far past?

*Merry.*—I will rub your temples, and fetch you again at last.

*Roister.*—It will not be possible.

*Merry.*—(Rubbing Roister's temples.) Yes, for twenty pound.

*Roister.*—What dost thou?

*Merry.*—Fetch you again out of your sound.

By this cross ye were nigh gone indeed; I might feel  
Your soul departing within an inch of your heel.  
Now follow my counsel.

*Roister.*—What is it?

*Merry.*—If I were you,

Custance should oft seek to me ere I would bow.

*Roister.*—Well, as thou wilt have me, even so will I do.

*Merry.*—Then shall ye revive again for an hour or two.

*Roister.*—As thou wilt; I am content for a little space.

*Merry.*—Good hap is not hasty, yet in space cometh grace.

To speak with Custance yourself should be very well;  
What good thereof may come, nor I nor you can tell.  
But now the matter standeth upon your marriage,  
Ye must now take unto you a lusty courage.  
Ye may not speak with a faint heart to Custance,

But with a lusty breast and countenance,  
That she may know she hath to answer to a man.

*Roister*.—Yes, I can do that as well as any can.

*Merry*.—Then, because ye must Custance face to face woo,  
Let us see how to behave yourself ye can do.  
Ye must have a portly brag, after your estate.

*Roister*.—Tush! I can handle that after the best rate.

*Merry*.—Well done! so lo, up man, with your head and chin;  
Up with that snout, man; so lo, now ye begin;  
So, that is somewhat like, but prank your coat, nay,  
when!

That is a lusty brute! Hands under your side, man;  
So lo, now is it even as it should be;  
That is somewhat like for a man of your degree.  
Then must ye stately go, jetting up and down.  
Tut! can ye no better shake the tail of your gown?  
There lo, such a lusty brag it is ye must make.

*Roister*.—To come behind and make curtsey, thou must some  
pains take.

*Merry*.—Else were I much to blame, I thank your mastership,  
The lord one day, all to begrime you with worship.  
(Pushes violently against *Roister*.)  
Back, sir sauce, let gentlefolks have elbow room!  
Void, sirs; see ye not Master *Roister Doister* come?  
Make place, my masters. (Knocks against him.)

*Roister*.—Thou jostlest now too nigh.

*Merry*.—Back, all rude louts!

*Roister*.—Tush!

*Merry*.—I cry your worship mercy.  
Hoighdagh! if fair, fine Mistress Custance saw you now,  
Ralph *Roister Doister* were her own, I warrant you.  
But now one other thing more yet I think upon.

*Roister*.—Show what it is.

*Merry*.—A wooer, be he never so poor,  
Must play and sing before his best belove's door,  
How much more than you?

*Roister*.—Thou speakest well, out of doubt.



*Merry*.—And perchance that would make her the sooner come out.

*Roister*.—Go call my musicians; bid them hie apace.

*Merry*.—I will be here with them ere ye can say trey ace.

*Roister*.—This was well said of Merrygreeke; I allow his wit.

Before my sweetheart's door we will have a fit.

That if my love come forth, that I may with her talk,

I doubt not but this gear shall on my side walk.

But lo! how well Merrygreeke is returned since.

*Merry*.—(Returning with the musicians.) There hath grown no grass on my heels since I went hence.

Lo! here have I brought that shall make you pastance.

*Roister*.—Come, sirs, let us sing to win my dear love Custance.

(They sing.)

I mun be married a Sunday,  
I mun be married a Sunday,  
Whosoever shall come this way,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

Roister Doister is my name,  
Roister Doister is my name,  
A lusty brute I am the same,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

Christian Custance have I found,  
Christian Custance have I found,  
A widow worth a thousand pound,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

Custance is as sweet as honey,  
Custance is as sweet as honey,  
I her lamb and she my coney,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

When shall we make our wedding feast?  
When shall we make our wedding feast?  
There shall be cheer for man and beast,  
I mun be married a Sunday.

*Merry*.—Lo! where she cometh, some countenance to her make,  
And ye shall hear me be plain with her for your sake.

*Custance*.—(Entering.) What gauding and fooling is this afore my door?

*Merry*.—May not folks be honest, pray you, though they be poor?

*Custance*.—As that thing may be true, so rich folks may be fools.

*Roister*.—Her talk is as fine as she had learned in schools.

*Merry*.—Look partly toward her, and draw a little near.

*Custance*.—Get ye home, idle folks!

*Merry*.—Why may not we be here?

Nay, and ye will haze, haze; otherwise, I tell you plain,  
And ye will not haze, then give us our gear again.

*Custance*.—Indeed I have of yours much gay things, God save all.

*Roister*.—Speak gently unto her, and let her take all.

*Merry*.—Ye are too tender-hearted: shall she make us daws?

Nay, dame, I will be plain with you in my friend's cause.

*Roister*.—Let all this pass, sweetheart, and accept my service.

*Custance*.—I will not be served with a fool in no wise;

When I choose an husband, I hope to take a man.

*Merry*.—And where will ye find one which can do that he can?

Now this man, toward you being so kind,

You not to make him an answer somewhat to his mind.

*Custance*.—I sent him a full answer by you, did I not?

*Merry*.—And I reported it.

*Custance*.—Nay, I must speak it again.

*Roister*.—No, no; he told it all.

*Merry*.—Was I not meetly plain?

*Roister*.—Yes.

*Merry*.—But I would not tell all, for, faith, if I had,

With you, Dame Custance, ere this hour it had been bad

And not without cause; for this goodly personage

Meant no less than to join with you in marriage.

*Custance*.—Let him waste no more labor nor suit about me.

*Merry*.—Ye know not where your preferment lieth, I see,

He sending you such a token, ring and letter.

*Custance*.—Marry, here it is; ye never saw a better.

*Merry*.—Let us see your letter.

*Custance*.—Hold! read it if ye can,

And see what letter it is to win a woman.

*Merry*.—(Reads.) To mine own dear coney bird, sweetheart  
and pigsny,

Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by.

Of this superscription do ye blame the style?

*Custance*.—With the rest, as good stuff as ye read a great while.

*Merry*.—Sweet mistress, whereas I love you nothing at all,

Regarding your substance and riches chief of all,

For your personage, beauty, demeanor and wit

I commend me unto you never a whit.

Sorry to hear report of your good welfare;

For, as I hear say, such your conditions are,

That ye be worthy favor of no living man,

To be abhorred of every honest man.

To be taken for a woman inclined to vice.

Nothing at all to virtue giving her due price.

Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought

Such a fine paragon as honest man ne'er bought.

And now by these presents I do you advertise

That I am minded to marry you in no wise.

For your goods and substance I could be content

To take you as ye are. If ye mind to be my wife,

Ye shall be assured, for the time of my life,

I will keep ye right well; from good raiment and fare

Ye shall not be kept but in sorrow and care.

Ye shall in no wise live at your own liberty;

Do and say what ye lust, ye shall never please me;

But when ye are merry, I will be all sad;

When ye are sorry, I will be very glad;

When ye seek your heart's ease, I will be unkind;

At no time in me shall ye much gentleness find,

But all things contrary to your will and mind

Shall be done: otherwise I will not be behind

To speak. And as for all them that would do you wrong

I will so help and maintain, ye shall not live long.

Nor any foolish dolt shall cumber you but I.

I, whoe'er say nay, will stick by you till I die.  
 Thus, good Mistress Custance, the Lord you save and  
     keep  
 From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep,  
 Who favo'reth you no less, ye may be bold,  
 Than this letter purporteth which ye have unfold.

*Custance*.—How by this letter of love? Is it not fine?

*Roister*.—By the arms of Calais, it is none of mine.

*Merry*.—Fie! you are foul to blame; this is your own hand.

*Custance*.—Might not a woman be proud of such an husband?

*Merry*.—Ah, that ye would in a letter show such despite!

*Roister*.—Oh, I would I had him here the which did it indite!

*Merry*.—Why, ye made it yourself, ye told me, by this light.

*Roister*.—Yea, I meant I wrote it mine own self yesternight.

*Custance*.—I wis, sir, I would not have sent you such a mock.

*Roister*.—Ye may so take it, but I meant it not so, by cock!

*Merry*.—Who can blame this woman to fume and fret and rage?

Tut! tut! yourself now have marred your own marriage.

Well, Mistress Custance, if ye can this remit,

This gentleman otherwise may your love requite.

*Custance*.—No, God be with you both, and seek no more to me.

(Exit.)

*Roister*.—Wough! she is gone forever; I shall her no more see.

*Merry*.—What, weep? Fie, for shame! And blubber? For  
     manhood's sake,

Never let your foe so much pleasure of you take.

Rather play the man's part, and do love refrain.

If she despise you, e'en despise ye her again.

*Roister*.—By goss, and for thy sake I defy her indeed.

*Merry*.—Yea, and perchance that way ye shall much sooner  
     speed;

For one mad property these women have in fee—

When ye will, they will not; will not ye, then will they.

Ah, foolish woman! ah, most unlucky Custance!

Ah, unfortunate woman! ah, peevish Custance!

Art thou to thine harms so obstinately bent,

That thou canst not see where lieth thine high preferment?

Canst thou not lub dis man, which could lub dee so well?  
Art thou so much thine own foe?

*Roister.*—Thou dost the truth tell.

*Merry.*—Well I lament.

*Roister.*—So do I.

*Merry.*—Wherefore?

*Roister.*—For this thing.

Because she is gone.

*Merry.*—I mourn for another thing.

*Roister.*—What is it, Merrygreeke, wherefore thou dost grief take?

*Merry.*—That I am not a woman myself for your sake.

I would have you myself, and a straw for yon Gill,  
And mock much of you, though it were against my will.  
I would not, I warrant you, fall in such a rage  
As to refuse such a goodly personage.

*Roister.*—In faith, I heartily thank thee, Merrygreeke.

*Merry.*—And I were a woman——

*Roister.*—Thou wouldst to me seek.

*Merry.*—For, though I say it, a goodly person ye be.

*Roister.*—No, no.

*Merry.*—Yes, a goodly man as ever I did see.

*Roister.*—No, I am a poor, homely man, as God made me.

*Merry.*—By the faith that I owe to God, sir, but ye be.

Would I might for your sake spend a thousand pound.

*Roister.*—I dare say thou wouldst have me to thy husband?

*Merry.*—Yes, and I were the fairest lady in the shire,

And knew you as I know you, and see you now here.

Well, I say no more.

*Roister.*—Gramercies! with all my heart.

*Merry.*—But since that cannot be, will ye play a wise part?

*Roister.*—How should I?

*Merry.*—Refrain from Custance a while now,

And I warrant her soon right glad to seek to you

Ye shall see her anon come on her knees creeping,  
And pray you to be good to her salt tears weeping.

*Roister.*—But what and she come not?

*Merry.*—In faith, then farewell she.

Or else, if ye be wroth, ye may avenged be.

*Roister.*—By cocks precious potstick, and e'en so I shall.

I will utterly destroy her, and house and all,

But I would be avenged, in the mean space,

On that vile scribbler that did my wooing disgrace.

*Merry.*—Scribbler, quoth you; indeed he is worthy no less.

I will call him to you, and ye bid me, doubtless.

*Roister.*—Yes; for although he had as many lives

As a thousand widows and a thousand wives,

As a thousand lions and a thousand rats,

A thousand wolves and a thousand cats,

A thousand bulls and a thousand calves,

And a thousand legions divided in halves,

He shall never 'scape death on my sword's point,

Though I should be torn therefor joint by joint!

*Merry.*—Nay, if ye will kill him, I will not fetch him;

I will not in so much extremity set him;

He may yet amend, sir, and be an honest man;

Therefore pardon him, good soul, as much as ye can.

*Roister.*—Well, for thy sake, this once with his life he shall  
pass;

But I will hew him all to pieces, by the mass.

*Merry.*—Nay, faith, ye shall promise that he shall no harm  
have,

Else I will not fetch him.

*Roister.*—I shall so, God me save.

But I may chide him a good.

*Merry.*—Yea, that do hardly.

*Roister.*—Go, then.

*Merry.*—I return and bring him to you by and by.

In the next scene the Scrivener who penned the letter is introduced. Roister is about to attack him, but

Merrygreeke intervenes, when explanations are made which, it will be seen, turn on the punctuation.

*Scrivener.*—Well, what say ye to me, or else I will be gone.

*Roister.*—I say the letter thou madest me was not good.

*Scrivener.*—Then did ye wrong copy it, of likelihood.

*Roister.*—Yes, out of thy copy word for word I wrote.

*Scrivener.*—Then was it as ye prayed to have it, I wot,

But in reading and pointing there was made some fault.

*Roister.*—I wot not, but it made all my matter to halt.

*Scrivener.*—How say you—is this mine original or no?

*Roister.*—The selfsame that I wrote out of, so mote I go.

*Scrivener.*—Look you on your own fist, and I will look on this,

And let this man be judge whether I read amiss.

To mine own dear coney bird, sweetheart and pigsny,

Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by.

How now? Doth not this superscription agree?

*Roister.*—Read that is within, and there ye shall the fault see.

*Scrivener.*—Sweet mistress, whereas I love you, nothing at all

Regarding your riches and substance; chief of all

For your personage, beauty, demeanor and wit

I commend me unto you; never a whit

Sorry to hear report of your good welfare.

For, as I hear say, such your conditions are,

That ye be worthy favor; of no living man

To be abhorred; of every honest man

To be taken for a woman inclined to vice

Nothing at all; to virtue giving her due price.

Wherefore, concerning marriage, ye are thought

Such a fine paragon as honest man ne'er bought.

And now by these presents I do you advertise

That I am minded to marry you, in no wise

For your goods and substance; I can be content

To take you as you are; if ye will be my wife,

Ye shall be assured for the time of my life.

I will keep you right well; from good raiment and fare

Ye shall not be kept; but in sorrow and care

Ye shall in no wise live; at your own liberty,  
 Do and say what ye lust; ye shall never please me  
 But when ye are merry; I will be all sad  
 When ye are sorry; I will be very glad  
 When ye seek your heart's ease; I will be unkind  
 At no time; in me shall ye much gentleness find.  
 But all things contrary to your will and mind  
 Shall be done otherwise; I will not be behind  
 To speak. And as for all they that would do you wrong,  
 I will so help and maintain ye, shall not live long.  
 Nor any foolish dolt shall cumber you, but I,  
 I, who ere say nay, will stick by you till I die.  
 Thus, good Mistress Custance, the Lord you save and  
 keep.

From me, Roister Doister, whether I wake or sleep,  
 Who favoereth you no less, ye may be bold,  
 Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold.  
 Now, sir, what default can ye find in this letter?

*Roister*.—Of truth, in my mind, there cannot be a better.

*Scrivener*.—Then was the fault in reading, and not in writing,  
 No, nor I dare say, in the form of inditing.

But who read this letter, that it sounded so naught?

*Merry*.—I read it, indeed.

*Scrivener*.—Ye read it not as ye ought.

*Roister*.—Why, thou wretched villain, was all this same fault in  
 thee? (Offers to strike.)

*Merry*.—(Strikes Roister.) I knock your costard if ye offer to  
 strike me.

*Roister*.—Strikest thou indeed? and I offered but in jest?

*Merry*.—Yea, and rap you again, except ye can sit in rest.  
 And I will no longer tarry here, me believe.

*Roister*.—What! wilt thou be angry, and I do thee forgive?  
 Fare thou well, scribbler, I cry thee mercy indeed.

*Scrivener*.—Fare ye well, bibbler, and worthily may ye speed.

Mistress Custance is sore beset by her clumsy suitor,  
 who, guided by Merrygreeke, takes every opportunity  
 to change her mind. He addresses her servant:



*Roister.*— Tell thy maister Goodluck  
That he cometh too late of this blossom to pluck.  
Let him keep him there still, or at leastwise make no  
haste,  
As for his labor hither he shall spend in waste.  
His betters be in place now.

*Merry.*—(Aside.) As long as it will hold.

*Custance.*—I will be even with thee, thou beast, thou mayst be  
bold.

*Roister.*—Will ye have us, then?

*Custance.*—I will never have thee.

*Roister.*—Then will I have you!

*Custance.*—No, the devil shall have thee.

I have gotten this hour more shame and harm by thee  
Than all thy life days thou canst do me honesty.

*Merry.*—(To *Roister.*) Why, now may ye see what it cometh  
to in the end,

To make a deadly foe of your most loving friend.

(To *Custance.*) And this letter, if ye would hear it  
now——

*Custance.*—I will hear none of it.

*Merry.*—In faith, would ravish you.

*Custance.*—He hath stained my name forever, this is clear.

*Roister.*—I can make all as well in an hour——

*Custance.*—I defy him.

*Merry.*—At my word?

*Custance.*—A shame take him.

Waste no more wind, for it will never be.

*Merry.*—This one fault with twain shall be mended, ye shall see.

Gentle Mistress Custance now, good Mistress Custance,

Honey Mistress Custance now, sweet Mistress Custance,

Golden Mistress Custance now, white Mistress Custance,

Silken Mistress Custance now, fair Mistress Custance.

*Custance.*—Faith, rather than to marry with such a doltish lout,

I would match myself with a beggar, out of doubt.

Speak not of winning me, for it shall never be so.

*Roister*.—Yes, dame, I will have you whether ye will or no.  
I command you to love me; wherefore should ye not?  
Is not my love to you chafing and burning hot?

*Merry*.—To her; that is well said!

*Roister*.—Shall I so break my brain  
To dote upon you, and ye not love us again?

*Merry*.—Well said yet.

*Custance*.—Go to, you goose.

*Merry*.—Well, sir, ye perceive,  
For all your kind offer, she will not you receive.

*Roister*.—Then a straw for her, and a straw for her again;  
She shall not be my wife, would she never so fain,  
No, an though she would be at ten thousand pound cost.

*Merry*.—Lo! dame, ye may see what a husband ye have lost.

*Custance*.—Yea, no force, a jewel much better lost than found.

*Merry*.—Ah, ye will not believe how this doth my heart wound.  
How should a marriage between you be toward,  
If both parties draw back and become so froward?

*Roister*.—(Threatening.) Nay, dame, I will fire thee out of thy  
house,

And destroy thee and all thine, and that by and by!

*Merry*.—Nay, for the passion of God, sir, do not so.

*Roister*.—Yes, except she will say yea to that she said no.

*Custance*.—And what! be there no officers, trow we, in town  
To check idle loiterers, bragging up and down?  
Where be they by whom vagabonds should be repressed,  
That poor, simple widows might live in peace and rest?  
Shall I never rid thee out of my company?  
I will call for help. What ho! come forth, Trupenie!

*Trupenie*.—(Entering.) Anon. What is your will, mistress?  
Did ye call me?

*Custance*.—Yea, go run apace, and as fast as may be,  
Pray Tristram Trusty, my most assured friend,  
To be here by and by, that he may me defend.

*Trupenie*.—That message quickly shall be done, by God's grace.  
(Exit.)

*Custance*.—Then shall we see, I trow, whether ye shall do me  
harm.

*Roister.*—Yes, in faith, Kit, I shall thee and thine so charm,  
That all women incarnate by thee may beware.

*Custance.*—Nay, as for charming me, come hither if thou dare!  
I shall clout thee till thou stink, both thee and thy train,  
And coyle thee mine own hands; and send thee home  
again.

*Roister.*—Yea, sayst thou me that, dame? dost thou me threaten?  
Go we; I still see whether I shall be beaten.

*Merry.*—Nay, by the death of Christ, let me now treat peace,  
For bloodshed will there be in case this strife increase.  
Ah, good Dame Custance, take better way with you.

*Custance.*—Let him do his worst. (She drives them to retreat.)

Mistress Custance reviews her little army in the next scene.

*Custance.*—So, sirrah! if I should not with him take this way,  
I should not be rid of him, I think, till doomsday.  
I will call forth my folks, that without any mocks,  
If he come again, we may give him raps and knocks.  
Madge Mumblecrust, come forth, and Tibet Talkapace.  
Yea, and come forth, too, Mistress Annot Alyface.  
(Enter the maids.)

*Custance.*—Like warriors, if need be, ye must show your  
strength.

The man that this day hath thus beguiled you  
Is Ralph Roister Doister, whom ye know well enow—  
The most lout and dastard that ever on ground trod.

*Tib. Talk.*—I see all folk mock him when he goeth abroad.

*Custance.*—What, pretty maid? will ye talk when I speak?

*Tib. Talk.*—No, forsooth, good mistress.

*Custance.*—Will ye my tale break?

He threateneth to come hither with all his force to fight.  
I charge you, if he come, on him with all your might.

*Mumbl.*—I with my distaff will reach him one rap.

*Tib. Talk.*—And I with my new broom will sweep him one swap,  
And then with our great club I will reach him one rap.

*An. Alyface.*—And I with our skimmer will fling him one flap.

*Tib. Talk.*—Then Trupenie's firefork will him shrewdly fray,  
And you with the spit may drive him quite away.

*Custance.*—Go, make all ready, that it may be e'en so.

*Tib. Talk.*—For my part, I shrew them that last about it go.

In the grand siege by Roister of Mistress Custance's domestic fort, Merrygreeke manages to damage Roister and aid her cause, which is victorious. But Gawin Goodluck has heard from Suresby some doubtful stories of his faithful wife. All ends well in the fifth act.

*Custance.*—I come forth to see and hearken for news good,  
For about this hour is the time, of likelihood,  
That Gawin Goodluck, by the sayings of Suresby,  
Would be at home. And lo! yond I see him I.  
What, Gawin Goodluck! the only hope of my life!  
Welcome home! and kiss me, your true espoused wife.

*Goodluck.*—Nay, soft, Dame Custance; I must first, by your  
license,  
See whether all things be clear in your conscience.  
I hear of your doings to me very strange.

*Custance.*—What fear ye? that my faith toward you should  
change?

*Good.*—I must needs mistrust ye be elsewhere entangled.  
For I hear that certain men with you have wrangled  
About the promise of marriage by you to them made.

*Custance.*—Could any man's report your mind therein persuade?

*Good.*—Well, ye must therein declare yourself to stand clear,  
Else I and you, Dame Custance, may not join this year.

*Custance.*—Then would I were dead, and fair laid in my grave.  
Ah, Suresby, is this the honesty that ye have?  
To hurt me with your report, not knowing the thing?

*Sim Suresby.*—If ye be honest, my words can hurt you nothing.  
But what I heard and saw, I might not but report.

*Custance*.—Ah, Lord help poor widows, destitute of comfort!

Truly, most dear spouse, naught was done but for pasture.

*Good*.—But such kind of sporting is homely dalliance.

*Custance*.—If ye knew the truth, ye would take all in good part.

*Good*.—By your leave, I am not half well skilled in that art.

*Custance*.—It was none but Roister Doister, that foolish mome.

*Good*.—Yea, Custance, better, they say, a bad excuse than none.

*Custance*.—Why, Tristram Trustie, sir, your true and faithful friend,

Was privy both to the beginning and the end.

Let him be the judge, and for me testify.

*Good*.—I will the more credit that he shall verify,

And because I will the truth know, e'en as it is,

I will to him myself, and know all without miss.

Come on, Sim Suresby, that before my friend thou may

Avouch the same words which thou didst to me say.

The next scene opens with a soliloquy.

*Custance*.—O Lord, how necessary it is nowadays,

That everybody live uprightly all manner of ways!

For let never so little a gap be open,

And be sure of this, the worst shall be spoken.

How innocent stand I in this for deed or thought,

And yet see what mistrust toward me it hath wrought.

But thou, Lord, knowest all folks' thoughts and eke intents,

And thou art the deliverer of all innocents.

Thou didst help the adulteress that she might be amended;

Much more, then, help, Lord, that never ill intended.

Thou didst help Susanna, wrongfully accused,

And no less dost thou see, Lord, how I am now abused.

Thou didst help Hester, when she should have died.

Help also, good Lord, that my truth may be tried.

Yet if Gawin Goodluck with Tristram Trustie speak,

I trust of ill report the force shall be but weak.

And lo! yond they come, sadly talking together.  
I will abide, and not shrink for their coming hither.

The slanders are disproved; Goodluck hies to his spouse.

*Good.*—Sweet Custance, neither heart can think nor tongue tell  
How much I joy in your constant fidelity.  
Come, now, kiss me, the pearl of perfect honesty.

*Custance.*—God let me no longer to continue in life  
Than I shall toward you continue a true wife.

*Good.*—Well, now to make you for this some part of amends,  
I shall desire first you, and then such of our friends  
As shall to you seem best, to sup at home with me,  
Where at your fought field we shall laugh and merry be.

The play ends with good cheer, and though she at first protests, Mistress Custance is persuaded by her husband to include Roister Doister and Merrygreeke in the company, to make their sport more piquant.

EDWARD THE SECOND

SCENES FROM A TRAGEDY

BY

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

Marlowe's *Edward II* was long considered the masterpiece among the historic dramas of the Elizabethan era, being preferred to Shakespeare's plays, not even excepting his *Richard III* and *King John*. It is in truth a powerful drama, though one tires of the character of Gaveston as much as did the nobles among whom he lived; and we are not sorry when one of them puts him out of the way. Only a few of the best passages are given, as the piece is too long to be presented in full.



"The death-scene of Marlowe's king," "moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted." So wrote Charles Lamb of this powerful play; but first Gaveston, newly returned from France, describes the pleasures in which the king takes most delight. These, it will be seen, are purely of the sensuous type; for the intellectual faculties of Edward II were never highly developed; nor were they, indeed, capable of such development.

*Gaveston.*—I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,  
Musicians, that with touching of a string  
May draw the pliant King which way I please.  
Music and poetry are his delight;  
Therefore I'll have Italian masks by night,  
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows;  
And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,  
Like Sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad;  
My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns,  
Shall with their goat-feet dance the antick hay.  
Sometimes a lovely boy in Dian's shape,  
With hair that gilds the water as it glides,  
Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,  
And in his sportful hands an olive tree  
To hide those parts which men delight to see,  
Shall bathe him in a spring, and there hard by,  
One like Acteon, peeping thro' the grove,  
Shall by the angry goddess be transform'd,  
And running in the likeness of an hart,

By yelping hounds pull'd down, shall seem to die;  
Such things as these best please his majesty.

The younger Mortimer repines at the insolence of Gaveston.

*Mortimer, Sr.*—Nephew, I must to Scotland, thou stay'st here.

Leave now to oppose thyself against the King.  
Thou seest by nature he is mild and calm,  
And seeing his mind so dotes on Gaveston,  
Let him without controlment have his will.  
The mightiest kings have had their minions:  
Great Alexander lov'd Hephestion;  
The conquering Hercules for his Hylas wept,  
And for Patroclus stern Achilles droop'd.  
And not kings only, but the wisest men;  
The Roman Tully lov'd Octavius;  
Grave Socrates wild Alcibiades.  
Then let his grace, whose youth is flexible,  
And promiseth as much as we can wish,  
Freely enjoy that vain light-headed earl,  
For riper years will wean him from such toys.

*Mortimer, Jr.*—Uncle, his wanton humor grieves not me;

But this I scorn, that one so basely born,  
Should by his sovereign's favor grow so pert,  
And riot with the treasure of the realm.  
While soldiers mutiny for want of pay,  
He wears a lord's revenue on his back,  
And Midas-like, he jets it in the court,  
With base outlandish cullions at his heels,  
Whose proud fantastic liveries make such show,  
As if that Proteus, god of shapes, appear'd.  
I have not seen a dapper jack so brisk;  
He wears a short Italian hooded cloak,  
Larded with pearl, and in his Tuscan cap  
A jewel of more value than the crown.  
While others walk below, the king and he,  
From out a window, laugh at such as we  
And flout our train, and jest at our attire.  
Uncle, 'tis this that makes me impatient.

The Barons reproach the King with the calamities which the realm endures from the ascendancy of his wicked favorite Gaveston.

King Edward, Lancaster, Warwick. The Mortimers and other Lords.

*Mortimer, Jr.*—Nay, stay, my lord, I come to bring you news.  
Mine uncle is taken prisoner by the Scots.

*Edward.*—Then ransom him.

*Lancaster.*—'Twas in your wars, you should ransom him.

*Mort., Jr.*—And you shall ransom him, or else——

*Kent.*—What, Mortimer, you will not threaten him?

*Edw.*—Quiet yourself, you shall have the broad seal,  
To gather for him throughout the realm.

*Lan.*—Your minion Gaveston hath taught you this.

*Mort., Jr.*—My Lord, the family of the Mortimers  
Are not so poor, but would they sell their land,  
Could levy men enough to anger you.  
We never beg, but use such prayers as these.

*Edw.*—Shall I still be haunted thus?

*Mort., Jr.*—Nay, now you are here alone, I'll speak my mind.

*Lan.*—And so will I, and then, my lord, farewell.

*Mort.*—The idle triumphs, masks, lascivious shows,  
And prodigal gifts bestow'd on Gaveston,  
Have drawn thy treasure dry, and made thee weak;  
The murmuring commons, overstretched, break.

*Lan.*—Look for rebellion, look to be depos'd;  
Thy garrisons are beaten out of France,  
And lame and poor lie groaning at the gates.  
The wild Oneye, with swarms of Irish kerns,  
Live uncontrol'd within the English pale.  
Unto the walls of York the Scots make road,  
And unresisted draw away rich spoils.

*Mort., Jr.*—The haughty Dane commands the narrow seas,  
While in the harbor ride thy ships unrigg'd.

*Lan.*—What foreign prince sends thee ambassadors?

*Mort.*—Who loves thee, but a sort of flatterers?

*Lan.*—Thy gentle queen, sole sister to Valoys,  
Complains that thou hast left her all forlorn.

*Mort.*—Thy court is naked, being bereft of those,  
That make a king seem glorious to the world:  
I mean the peers, whom thou shouldst dearly love.  
Libels are cast against thee in the street:  
Ballads and rhimes made of thy overthrow.

*Lan.*—The Northern brothers seeing their houses burnt,  
Their wives and children slain, run up and down  
Cursing the name of thee and Gaveston.

*Mort.*—When wert thou in the field with banner spread?  
But once: and then thy soldiers march'd like players,  
With garish robes, not armor; and thyself,  
Bedaub'd with gold, rode laughing at the rest,  
Nodding and shaking of thy spangled crest,  
Where women's favors hung like labels down.

*Lan.*—And thereof came it, that the fleering Scots,  
To England's high disgrace, have made this jig:  
Maids of England, sore may you moorn,  
For your lemmons you have lost at Bennock's born  
With a heave and a ho.  
What weened the King of England,  
So soon to have wooon Scotland,  
With a rombellow?

*Mort.*—Wigmore shall fly to set my uncle free.

*Lan.*—And when 'tis gone, our swords shall purchase more.  
If ye be mov'd, revenge it as you can;  
Look next to see us with our ensigns spread.  
(*Exeunt Nobles.*)

The King, being deposed, surrenders his crown into the hands  
of the Bishop of Winchester and the Earl of Leicester at  
Kenilworth Castle.

*Leicester.*—Be patient, good my lord, cease to lament,  
Imagine Killingworth castle were your court,  
And that you lay for pleasure here a space,  
Not of compulsion or necessity.

*Edward.*—Leister, if gentle words might comfort me,  
Thy speeches long ago had eas'd my sorrows;

For kind and loving hast thou always been.  
 The griefs of private men are soon allay'd,  
 But not of kings. The forest deer being struck,  
 Runs to an herb that closeth up the wounds;  
 But when the imperial lion's flesh is gor'd,  
 He rends and tears it with his wrathful paw,  
 And highly scorning that the lowly earth  
 Should drink his blood, mounts up to th' air.  
 And so it fares with me, whose dauntless mind  
 Th' ambitious Mortimer would seek to curb,  
 And that unnatural queen, false Isabel,  
 That thus hath pent and mew'd me in a prison:  
 For such outrageous passions claw my soul,  
 As with the wings of rancor and disdain  
 Full oft am I soaring up to high heav'n,  
 To 'plain me to the gods against them both.  
 But when I call to mind I am a king,  
 Methinks I should revenge me of the wrongs  
 That Mortimer and Isabel have done.  
 But what are kings, when regiment is gone,  
 But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?  
 My nobles rule, I bear the name of king;  
 I wear the crown, but am controll'd by them,  
 By Mortimer, and my unconstant queen,  
 Who spots my nuptial bed with infamy;  
 Whilst I am lodg'd within this cave of care,  
 Where sorrow at my elbow still attends,  
 To company my heart with sad laments,  
 That bleeds within me for this strange exchange.  
 But tell me, must I now resign my crown?  
 To make usurping Mortimer a king?

*Bishop.*—Your grace mistakes, it is for England's good,  
 And princely Edward's right, we crave the crown.

*Edw.*—No, 'tis for Mortimer, not Edward's head;  
 For he's a lamb, encompassed by wolves,  
 Which in a moment will abridge his life.  
 But if proud Mortimer do wear this crown,  
 Heav'ns turn it to a blaze of quenchless fire,  
 Or like the snaky wreath of Tisiphon,  
 Engirt the temples of his hateful head:

So shall not England's vines be perished,  
But Edward's name survive, though Edward dies.

*Lei.*—My lord, why waste you thus the time away?

They stay your answer, will you yield your crown?

*Edw.*—Ah, Leicester, weigh how hardly I can brook  
To lose my crown and kingdom without cause;  
To give ambitious Mortimer my right,  
That like a mountain overwhelms my bliss,  
In which extreme my mind here murder'd is.  
But what the heav'ns appoint, I must obey.  
Here, take my crown; the life of Edward too;  
Two Kings in England cannot reign at once—  
But stay awhile, let me be king till night,  
That I may gaze upon this glittering crown;  
So shall my eyes receive their last content,  
My head the latest honor due to it,  
And jointly both yield up their wished right.  
Continue ever, thou celestial sun;  
Let never silent night possess this clime;  
Stand still, you watches of the element;  
All times and seasons, rest you at a stay,  
That Edward may be still fair England's king.  
But day's bright beam doth vanish fast away,  
And needs I must resign my wished crown;  
Inhuman creatures! nurs'd with tiger's milk!  
Why gape you for your sovereign's overthrow?  
My diadem I mean, and guiltless life.  
See, monsters, see, I'll wear my crown again.  
What, fear you not the fury of your king?  
But, hapless Edward, thou art fondly led,  
They pass not for thy frowns as late they did,  
But seek to make a new-elected king;  
Which fills my mind with strange despairing thoughts,  
Which thoughts are martyred with endless torments,  
And in this torment comfort find I none,  
But that I feel the crown upon my head;  
And therefore let me wear it yet awhile.

*Messenger.*—My lord, the parliament must have present news,  
And therefore say, will you resign or no?

*Edw.*—I'll not resign! but whilst I live be king.

Traitors be gone, and join with Mortimer.  
Elect, conspire, install, do what you will;  
Their blood and yours shall seal these treacheries!

*Bish.*—This answer we'll return, and so farewell.

*Lei.*—Call them again, my lord, and speak them fair;  
For if they go, the prince shall lose his right.

*Edw.*—Call thou them back, I have no power to speak.

*Lei.*—My lord, the king is willing to resign.

*Bish.*—If he be not, let him choose.

*Edw.*—O would I might! but heav'n and earth conspire  
To make me miserable! here, receive my crown;  
Receive it? no, these innocent hands of mine  
Shall not be guilty of so foul a crime.  
He of you all that most desires my blood,  
And will be called the murderer of a king,  
Take it. What, are you mov'd? pity you me?  
Then send for unrelenting Mortimer,  
And Isabel, whose eyes, being turn'd to steel,  
Will sooner sparkle fire than shed a tear.  
Yet stay, for rather than I will look on them.  
Here, here; now sweet God of heav'n,  
Make me despise this transitory pomp,  
And sit for ever inthroniz'd in heav'n!  
Come death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,  
Or, if I live, let me forget myself.

Berkley Castle. The King is left alone with Lightborn, a murderer.

*Edward.*—Who's there? what light is that? wherefore com'st thou?

*Lightborn.*—To comfort you, and bring you joyful news.

*Edw.*—Small comfort finds poor Edward in thy looks.  
Villain, I know thou com'st to murder me.

*Light.*—To murder you, my most gracious lord!  
Far is it from my heart to do you harm.  
The queen sent me to see how you were used,  
For she relents at this your misery;

And what eyes can refrain from shedding tears,  
To see a king in this most piteous state.

*Edu.*—Weep'st thou already? list a while to me  
And then thy heart, were it as Gurney's is,  
Or as Matrevis, hewn from the Caucasus,  
Yet will it melt, ere I have done my tale.  
This dungeon where they keep me is a sink  
Wherein the filth of all the castle falls.

*Light.*—O villains!

*Edu.*—And there, in mire and puddle have I stood  
This ten days' space; and lest that I should sleep,  
One plays continually upon a drum.  
They give me bread and water, being a king;  
So that, for want of sleep and sustenance,  
My mind's distemper'd, and my body's numb'd,  
And whether I have limbs or no, I know not.  
O would my blood drop out from every vein,  
As doth this water from my tattered robes.  
Tell Isabel the queen, I look'd not thus,  
When for her sake I ran at tilt in France,  
And there unhors'd the duke of Cleremont.

*Light.*—O speak no more, my lord! this breaks my heart.  
Lie on this bed, and rest yourself awhile.

*Edu.*—These looks of thine can harbor naught but death!  
I see my tragedy written in thy brows.  
Yet stay awhile, forbear thy bloody hand,  
And let me see the stroke before it comes,  
That even then when I shall lose my life,  
My mind may be more stedfast on my God.

*Light.*—What means your highness to mistrust me thus?

*Edu.*—What mean'st thou to dissemble with me thus?

*Light.*—These hands were never stained with innocent blood,  
Nor shall they now be tainted with a king's.

*Edu.*—Forgive my thought, for having such a thought.  
One jewel have I left, receive thou this.  
Still fear I, and I know not what's the cause,  
But every joint shakes as I give it thee.  
O if thou harbor'st murder in thy heart,



Let the gift change thy mind, and save thy soul.  
 Know that I am a king; Oh, at that name  
 I feel a hell of grief. Where is my crown?  
 Gone, gone, and do I still remain alive?

*Light*.—You're overwatch'd, my lord, lie down and rest.

*Edw*.—But that grief keeps me waking, I should sleep;  
 For not these ten days have these eyelids closed.  
 Now as I speak they fall, and yet with fear  
 Open again. O wherefore sitt'st thou here?

*Light*.—If you mistrust me, I'll be gone, my lord.

*Edw*.—No, no, for if thou mean'st to murder me,  
 Thou wilt return again; and therefore stay.

*Light*.—He sleeps.

*Edw*.—O let me not die; yet stay, O stay awhile.

*Light*.—How now, my lord?

*Edw*.—Something still buzzeth in mine ears,  
 And tells me if I sleep I never wake;  
 This fear is that which makes me tremble thus.  
 And therefore tell me, wherefore art thou come?

*Light*.—To rid thee of thy life; Matrevis, come.

*Edw*.—I am too weak and feeble to resist:  
 Assist me, sweet God, and receive my soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

Except perhaps for *Tamburlaine the Great*, the tragedy of *Edward II* ranks as Marlowe's masterpiece, and in this, says one of his critics, "Marlowe has come nearer, by many degrees, to Shakespeare than any of his other predecessors have ever come near to Marlowe. The scene of the King's deposition at Kenilworth is almost as much finer in tragic effect and poetic quality as it is shorter and less elaborate than the corresponding scene in Shakespeare's *Richard II*. The terror of the death-scene undoubtedly rises into horror; but this horror is, with skillful simplicity of treatment, preserved

from passing into disgust." Here our commendation must cease; for the characters excite no greater sympathy or interest than is caused by the mere unfolding of events or display of passion,—except in the scene of the deposition—and are rather animal than spiritual in their outburst of rage or depth of emotion. The true balance of cause and effect, the real note of scenic harmony is not yet struck with the accuracy of touch and the perfect security of a master-hand. Nevertheless, in *Edward II* is a vast improvement on the historical dramas that preceded it, and there are occasional scenes and passages that explain to us why, in its day, it was preferred to the historic masterpieces of Shakespeare; as also, it may be added, were the "Interludes" of John Lilly and the comedies of Ben Jonson.

A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS

A COMEDY

BY

PHILIP MASSINGER.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

---

*SIR GILES OVERREACH.*

*LORD LOVELL.*

*WELLBORN.*

*MARRALL.*

*ALLWORTH.*

*JUSTICE GREEDY.*

*PARSON WILLDO.*

*AMBLE.*

*ORDER.*

*FURNACE.*

*WATCHALL.*

*VINTNER.*

*TAILOR.*

*LADY ALLWORTH.*

*FROTH.*

*MARGARET.*

*TABITHA.*

*ABIGAIL.*

## PRELUDE.

Of all Massinger's plays, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is the only one that has held the stage; and that solely through the strength of its leading character, Sir Giles Overreach. From the first appearance of the comedy, in 1633, until the present time, the part has been in favor with some of the foremost actors of successive generations, such men as Garrick, John Kemble, Edmund Kean and Junius Brutus Booth. Apart from Sir Giles, the personages are purely of the conventional type, and contrast somewhat feebly with the rich life of Shakespeare's youthful lovers and reckless scapegraces. But the plot is ingenious and effective, and in the "compound of the lion and the fox," as Sir Giles has been termed, is perhaps the most powerful presentment of the stage villain ever given to the world.

## ACT I. SCENE I.

A Village. Wellborn discovered, with a large rough stick, in tattered apparel, knocking at the alehouse door. Tapwell and Froth come from the house.

*Wellborn*.—No credit, nor no liquor?

*Tapwell*.—Not a suck, sir;

Nor the remainder of a single can,

Left by a drunken porter.

*Froth.*—Not the dropping of the tap for your morning's draught, sir:

'Tis verity, I assure you.

*Well.*—Verity, you brache!

The devil turned precisian? Rogue, what am I?

*Tap.*—Troth, durst I trust you with a looking-glass  
To let you see your trim shape, you would quit me,  
And take the name yourself.

*Well.*—How? dog! (Raising his cudgel.)

*Tap.*—Advance if you dare!

There dwells, and within call, if it please your worship,  
A potent monarch, called the constable,  
That does command a citadel, called the stocks,  
Whose guards are certain files of rusty billmen,  
Such as with great dexterity will hale  
Your threadbare, tattered—

*Well.*—Rascal! slave!

*Froth.*—No rage, sir.

*Tap.*—At his own peril! Do not put yourself  
In too much heat, there being no water near  
To quench your thirst; and other drink, I take it,  
You must no more remember; not in a dream, sir.

*Well.*—Why, thou unthankful villain, dar'st thou talk thus?  
Is not thy house, and all thou hast, my gift?

*Tap.*—I find it not in chalk; and Timothy Tapwell  
Does keep no other register.

*Well.*—Am not I he

Whose riots fed and clothed thee? Wert thou not  
Born on my father's land, and proud to be  
A drudge in his house?

*Tap.*—What I was, sir, it skills not;  
What you are, is apparent; but, since you  
Talk of father, in my hope it will torment you,  
I'll briefly tell your story. Your dead father,  
Old Sir John Wellborn,  
My quondam master, was a man of worship;  
Bore the whole sway of the shire, kept a great house,  
Relieved the poor, and so forth; but, he dying,

And his estate coming to you,

Late Master Francis, but now forlorn Wellborn—

*Well.*—Slave, stop! or I shall lose myself.

*Froth.*—Very hardly;

You cannot out of your way.

*Tap.*—You were then a lord of acres, the prime gallant,

And I your under butler.

You had a merry time oft; hawks and hounds,

With choice of running horses: mistresses,

And other such extravagances: which

Your uncle, Sir Giles Overreach, observing,

Resolving not to lose the opportunity,

On statutes, mortgages, and binding bonds,

A while supplied your folly, and, having got

Your land, then left you.

*Well.*—Some curate hath penned this invective, mongrel,

And you have studied it.

*Tap.*—I've not done yet;

Your land gone, and your credit not worth a token,

You grew the common borrower; no man 'scaped you;

While poor Tim Tapwell, with a little stock,

Some forty pounds or so, bought a small cottage;

Humbled myself to marriage with my Froth here—

*Well.*—Hear me, ungrateful hell-hound! Did not I

Make purses for you? Then you licked my boots,

And thought your holiday cloak too coarse to clean 'em.

'Twas I, that, when I heard thee swear if ever

Thou could'st arrive at forty pounds, thou would'st

Live like an emperor; 'twas I that gave it

In ready gold. Deny this, wretch!

*Tap.*—I must, sir!

For, from the tavern to the taphouse, all,

On forfeiture of their licenses, stand bound

Ne'er to remember who their best guests were,

If they grew poor, like you.

*Well.*—They're well rewarded,

That beggar themselves to make such rascals rich.

Thou viper, thankless viper!

Eut, since you're grown forgetful, I will help

Your memory, and tread you into mortar;  
Not leave one bone unbroken. (Beats him.)

*Tap.*—Oh! Oh! Oh!

*Froth.*—Help, help!—

Enter Allworth.

*Allworth.*—Hold, for my sake, hold!

Deny me, Frank? They are not worth your anger.

*Well.*—For once, thou hast redeemed them from this sceptre.

But let 'em vanish;—

Nay, if you grumble, I revoke my pardon.

(Wellborn and Allworth talk apart.)

*Froth.*—This comes of your prating, husband.

*Tap.*—Patience, Froth;

There's law to cure our bruises.

(Exeunt Tapwell and Froth into the alehouse.)

*Well.*—Sent to your mother?

*All.*—My lady, Frank, my patroness, my all!

She's such a mourner for my father's death,

And, in her love to him, so favors me,

I cannot pay too much observance to her:

There are few such stepdames.

*Well.*—'Tis a noble widow,

And keeps her reputation pure and clear.

But, 'pr'ythee, tell me,

Has she no suitors?

*All.*—E'en the best of the shire, Frank,

My lord excepted: such as sue and send

And send and sue again: but to no purpose.

Their frequent visits have not gained her presence;

Yet she's so far from sullenness and pride,

That I dare undertake, you shall meet from her

A liberal entertainment.

*Well.*—I doubt it not. Now, Allworth, listen to me,

And mark my counsel: I am bound to give it.

Thy father was my friend; and that affection

I bore to him, in right descends to thee;

I will not have the least affront stick on thee,

If I with any danger can prevent it.



*All.*—I thank your noble care: but, pray you, in what  
Do I run the hazard?

*Well.*—Art thou not in love?  
Put it not off with wonder.

*All.*—In love?

*Well.*—You think you walk in clouds, but are transparent.  
I've heard all, and the choice that you have made;  
And, with my finger, can point out the north star  
By which the loadstone of your folly's guided;  
And, to confirm this true, what think you of  
Fair Margaret, the only child and heir  
Of cormorant Overreach? Dost blush and start  
To hear her only named? Blush at your want  
Of wit and reason.

*All.*—Howe'er you have discovered my intents,  
You know my aims are lawful; and, if ever  
The queen of flowers, the boast of spring, the rose,  
Sprang from an envious briar, I may infer  
There's such disparity in their conditions,  
Between the goddess of my soul, the daughter,  
And the base churl, her father.

*Well.*—Grant this true,  
As I believe it, cans't thou ever hope  
To enjoy a quiet bed with her, whose father  
Ruined thy state?

*All.*—And yours, too.

*Well.*—I confess it, Allworth.

Or cans't thou think, if self-love blind thee not,  
That Sir Giles Overreach, who, to make her great  
In swelling titles, without touch of conscience  
Will cut his neighbor's throat—and, I hope, his own,  
too—

Will e'er consent to make her thine? Give o'er,  
And think of some course suitable to thy rank,  
And prosper in it.

*All.*—You have well advised me.

But, in the meantime, you, that are so studious  
Of my affairs, wholly neglect your own.  
Remember yourself, and in what plight you are.

*Well.*—No matter, no matter.

*All.*—Yes, 'tis much material:

You know my fortune, and my means; yet something  
I can spare from myself to help your wants.

(*Offers him money.*)

*Well.*—How's this?

*All.*—Nay, be not angry.

*Well.*—Money from thee?

From a boy? one that lives  
At the devotion of a stepmother,  
And the uncertain favor of a lord?  
I'll eat my arms first. Howsoe'er, blind Fortune  
Hath spent the utmost of her malice on me,  
Though I am rudely thrust out of an alehouse,  
And thus accoutered—know not where to eat,  
Or drink, or sleep, but underneath this canopy—  
Although I thank thee, I disdain thy offer.  
No—as I, in my madness, broke my state,  
Without th' assistance of another's brain,  
In my right wits, I'll piece it; at the worst,  
Die thus, and be forgotten.

*All.*—Fare thee well.

(*Exeunt.*)

## SCENE II.

A hall in Lady Allworth's house. Amble, Order, Furnace and Watchall.

*Order.*—Set all things right; or, as my name is Order,  
And by this staff of office, that commands you,  
This chain and double ruff, symbols of power,  
Whoever misses in his function,  
For one whole week makes forfeiture of his breakfast  
And privilege in the wine-cellar.

*Watchall.*—You are merry,  
Good Master Steward.

*Furnace.*—Let him; I'll be angry.

*Amble.*—Why, fellow Furnace, 'tis not twelve o'clock yet,  
Nor dinner taken up; then, 'tis allowed,  
Cooks, by their places, may be choleric.

*Fur.*—You think you've spoken wisely, goodman Amble,  
My lady's go-before.

*Ord.*—Nay, nay, no wrangling.

*Fur.*—Twit me with the authority of the kitchen!  
At all hours, and all places, I'll be angry:  
And, thus provoked, when I am at my prayers  
I will be angry.

*Amb.*—There was no hurt meant.

*Fur.*—I'm friends with thee; and yet I will be angry.

*Wat.*—With whom?

*Fur.*—No matter whom; yet, now I think on't,  
I'm angry with my lady.

*Amb.*—Heaven forbid, man!

*Ord.*—What cause has she given thee?

*Fur.*—Cause enough, master Steward.  
I was entertained by her to please her palate,  
And till she forswore eating, I performed it.  
Now, since our master, noble Allworth, died,  
Though I crack my brains to find out tempting sauces,  
When I am three parts roasted,  
And the fourth part parboiled, to prepare her viands,  
She keeps her chamber, dines with a panada,  
Or water-gruel, my sweat never thought on.

*Ord.*—But your art is seen in the dining-room.

*Fur.*—By whom?  
By such as pretend love to her; but come  
To feed upon her. Yet, of all the harpies  
That do devour her, I am out of charity  
With none so much as the thin-gutted squire  
That's stolen into commission.

*Ord.*—Justice Greedy?

*Fur.*—The same, the same. Meat's cast away upon him;  
It never thrives. He holds this paradox:  
Who eats not well, can ne'er do justice well.  
His stomach's as insatiate as the grave.

(A knocking without.)

*Wat.*—One knocks.

(Exit.)

*Ord.*—Our late young master!

Enter Watchall and Allworth, saluting them.

*Wat.*—Welcome, sir.

*Fur.*—You're welcome:

If you've a stomach, a cold bake-meat's ready.

*Ord.*—His father's picture in little.

*Amb.*—We are all your servants.

*All.*—At once my thanks to all.

This is yet some comfort. Is my lady stirring?

*Ord.*—Her presence answers for us.

Enter Lady Allworth, Abigail and Tabitha.

*Lady Allworth.*—Sort those silks well.

I'll take the air alone: (Exeunt Tabitha and Abigail.)

And, as I gave directions, if this morning

I'm visited by any, entertain 'em

As heretofore; but say, in my excuse,

I'm indisposed.

*Ord.*—We shall, madam.

*Lady A.*—Do, and leave me.

(Exeunt Watchall, Furnace, Order and Amble.)

Nay, stay you, Allworth. Tell me, how is't with

Your noble master?

*All.*—Ever like himself:

No scruple lessened in the full weight of honor.

He did command me—pardon my presumption—

As his unworthy deputy, to kiss

Your ladyship's fair hands.

*Lady A.*—I'm honored in

His favor to me. Does he hold his purpose

For the Low Countries?

*All.*—Constantly, good madam:

But will, in person, first present his service.

*Lady A.*—And how approve you of his course? you're yet,

Like virgin parchment, capable of any

Inscription, vicious or honorable:

I will not force your will, but leave you free

To your own election.

*All.*—Any form you please

I will put on, but—might I make my choice—  
With humble emulation, I would follow  
The path my lord marks to me.

*Lady A.*—'Tis well answered,

And I commend your spirit: your father, Allworth,  
My ever-honored husband, some few hours  
Before the will of heaven took him from me,  
Did recommend you by the dearest ties  
Of perfect love between us, to my charge:  
And, therefore, when I speak, you are bound to hear  
With such respect as if he lived in me.

*All.*—I have found you,

Most honored madam, more than a mother to me;  
And, with my utmost strength of care and service,  
Will labor that you never may repent  
Your bounties showered upon me.

*Lady A.*—I much hope it.

These were your father's words:—If e'er my son  
Follow the war, tell him, it is a school  
Where all the principles tending to honor  
Are taught, if truly followed: but for such  
As repair thither as a place in which  
They do presume they may with license practice  
Their lawless riots, they shall never merit  
The noble name of soldiers.  
To obey their leaders, and shun mutinies;  
To bear with patience the winter's cold,  
And summer's scorching heat;  
To dare boldly  
In a fair cause; and, for their country's sake,  
To run upon the cannon's mouth undaunted;  
These are the essential parts make up a soldier;  
Not swearing, dice, or drinking.

*All.*—There's no syllable

You speak, but is to me an oracle.

*Lady A.*—To conclude:

Beware ill company; for, often men  
Are like to those with whom they do converse;

And, from one man I warn you, and that's Wellborn;  
 Not 'cause he's poor—that rather claims your pity;  
 But that he's in his manners so depraved,  
 And hath in vicious courses lost himself.  
 'Tis true, your father loved him, while he was  
 Worthy the loving; but, if he had lived  
 To've known him as he is, he had cast him off,  
 As you must do.  
 Somebody comes. This way:  
 Follow me to my chamber; you shall have gold  
 To furnish you like my son, and still supplied  
 As I hear from you. (Exeunt.)

Enter Order, Watchall, Sir Giles Overreach, Marrall, Greedy,  
 Furnace and Amble.

*Greedy*.—Not to be seen!

*Sir Giles*.—Still cloistered up! Her reason,  
 I hope, assures her, though she makes herself  
 Close prisoner ever for her husband's loss,  
 'Twill not recover him.

*Ord*.—Sir, 'tis her will;  
 Which we, that are her servants, ought to serve,  
 And not dispute: howe'er, you're nobly welcome;  
 And, if you please to stay, that you may think so,  
 There came, not six days since, from Hull, a pipe  
 Of rich Canary, which shall spend itself  
 For my lady's honor.

*Gree*.—Is it of the right race?  
 (Sir Giles and Marrall converse apart.)

*Ord*.—Yes, Master Greedy.

*Amb*.—How his mouth runs o'er!

*Fur*.—I'll make it run and run.  
 Save your good worship!

*Gree*.—Honest Master Cook, thy hand; again: how I love thee!  
 Are the good dishes still in being? speak, boy.

*Fur*.—If you've a mind to feed, there is a chine  
 Of beef well seasoned.

*Gree*.—Good!

*Fur.*—A pheasant, larded.

*Gree.*—That I might now give thanks for it!

*Fur.*—Besides, there came last night, from the forest of Sherwood,

The fattest stag I ever cooked.

*Gree.*—A stag, man?

*Fur.*—A stag, sir; part of it prepared for dinner  
And baked in puff-paste.

*Gree.*—Puff-paste, too! Sir Giles,  
A ponderous chine of beef! a pheasant larded!  
And red deer, too, Sir Giles, and baked in puff-paste!  
All business set aside, let us give thanks here.

*Sir G.*—You know, we cannot.

*Marrall.*—Your worships are to sit on a commission,  
And, if you fail to come, you lose the cause.

*Gree.*—Cause me no causes; I'll prove't, for such a dinner,  
We may put off a commission: you shall find it  
Henrici decimo quarto.

*Sir G.*—Fie, Master Greedy!  
Will you lose me a thousand pounds for a dinner?  
No more, for shame! We must forget the belly  
When we think of profit.

*Gree.*—Well, you shall o'er-rule me.  
I could e'en cry now. Do you hear, Master Cook?  
Send but a corner of that immortal pasty.  
And I, in thankfulness, will, by your boy,  
Send you—a brace of three-pences.

*Fur.*—Will you be so prodigal?

*Sir G.* (to Order)—Remember me to your lady.

Enter Wellborn.

Whom have we here?

*Well.*—You know me.

*Sir G.*—I did once, but now will not;  
Thou art no blood of mine.  
Avaunt, thou beggar!

If ever thou presume to cross me more,  
I'll have thee caged and whipped. (Exit.)

*Gree.*—I'll grant the warrant.

Think of pye-corner, Furnace!

(Exeunt Greedy and Marrall, Marrall eyeing Wellborn contemptuously, who takes a chair and sits.)

*Wat.*—Will you out, sir?

I wonder how you durst creep in.

*Ord.*—This is rudeness,

And saucy impudence.

*Amb.*—Cannot you stay

To be served, among your fellows, from the basket,  
But you must press into the hall?

*Fur.*—Pr'ythee, vanish

Into some outhouse, though it be the pigstye;  
My scullion shall come to thee.

*Well.*—This is rare.

Enter Allworth.

Oh, here's Tom Allworth. Tom!

*All.*—We must be strangers;

Nor would I have you seen here for a million! (Exit.)

*Well.*—Better and better. He contemns me, too!

Enter Abigail and Tabitha.

*Abigail* (seeing Wellborn).—Mercy preserve my sight!

What thing is this?

*Tabitha.*—A wretched object, truly.

Let's hence, for heaven's sake, or I shall swoon.

*Abi.*—I begin to faint already. (Exeunt.)

*Fur.*—Will you know your way, sir?

*Amb.*—Or shall we teach you,

By the head and shoulders?

*Well.*—No; I will not stir:

Do you mark, I will not. (Starts up.) Let me see the wretch



That dares attempt to force me. Why, you slaves,  
Created only to make legs, and cringe;  
To carry in a dish, and shift a trencher;  
That have not souls only to hope a blessing  
Beyond your master's leaving—who advances?  
Who shows me the way? (Threatening them.)

*All the Servants.*—Help, fellows, help!—Within, there!

*Ord.*—Here comes my lady.

Enter Lady Allworth.

*Lady A.*—How now? What noise is this?

*Well.*—Madam, my designs  
Bear me to you.

*Lady A.*—To me?

*Well.*—And, though I've met with  
But ragged entertainment from your grooms here,  
I hope from you to receive that noble usage,  
As may become the true friend of your husband,  
And then I shall forget these.

*Lady A.*—I'm amazed,  
To see and hear this rudeness. Dar'st thou think,  
Though sworn, that it can ever find belief  
That I, who to the best men of this country  
Denied my presence since my husband's death,  
Can fall so low as to exchange words with thee?

*Well.*—Scorn me not, good lady;  
But, as in form you are angelical,  
Imitate the heavenly natures, and vouchsafe  
At the least, a while to hear me. You will grant  
The blood that runs in this arm is as noble  
As that which fills your veins; your swelling titles,  
Your ample fortune, with your men's observance  
And women's flattery, are in you no virtues;  
Nor these rags, with my poverty, in me vices.  
You have a fair fame, and, I know, deserve it;—  
Yet, lady, I must say, in nothing more  
Than in the pious sorrow you have shown  
For your late noble husband.

*Ord.*—There he touched her. (Aside.)

*Well.*—That husband, madam, was once in his fortune  
 Almost as low as I; wants, debts, and quarrels,  
 Lay heavy on him: let it not be thought  
 A boast in me, though I say, I relieved him.  
 'Twas I that gave him fashion; mine the sword  
 That did on all occasions second his;  
 I brought him on and off with honor, lady;  
 And when in all men's judgments he was sunk,  
 And in his own hopes not to be buoyed up,  
 I stepped unto him, took him by the hand,  
 And set him upright.

*Fur.*—Are not we base rogues,  
 That could forget this? (Aside.)

*Well.*—I confess, you made him  
 Master of your estate; nor could your friends,  
 Though he brought no wealth with him, blame you for't:  
 For he'd a shape, and to that shape a mind  
 Made up of all parts, either great or noble;  
 So winning a behavior, not to be  
 Resisted, madam.

*Lady A.*—'Tis most true, he had.

*Well.*—For his sake, then, in that I was his friend,  
 Do not condemn me.

*Lady A.*—For what's past, excuse me:  
 I will redeem it. (Offers him her pocket-book.)

*Well.*—Madam, on no terms:  
 I will nor beg nor borrow sixpence of you;  
 But be supplied elsewhere, or want thus ever.  
 One only suit I make; pray give me leave.  
 (Lady Allworth signs to the servants, who retire.)  
 I will not tire your patience with relation  
 Of the bad art my uncle, Overreach,  
 Still forged to strip me of my fair possessions;  
 Nor how he now shuts door upon my want.  
 Would you but vouchsafe  
 To your dear husband's friend—as well you may,  
 Your honor still let free—but such feigned grace,  
 As might beget opinion in Sir Giles

Of a true passion tow'rds me, you would see,  
In the mere thought to prey on me again,  
When all that's yours were mine, he'd turn my friend;  
And, that no rub might stay my course to you,  
Quit all my owings, set me trimly forth,  
And furnished well with gold—which I should use,  
I trust, to your no shame, lady; but live  
Ever a grateful debtor to your gentleness.

*Lady A.*—What! nothing else?

*Well.*—Nothing, unless you please to charge your servants  
To throw away a little respect upon me.

*Lady A.*—All you demand is yours.

(She beckons the servants.)

Respect this gentleman,  
As 'twere myself. Adieu, dear Master Wellborn—  
Pray let me see you with your oftenest means:  
I am ever bound to you.

*Well.*—Your honor's servant.

(Kisses her hand. Exit Lady Allworth.)

*All the Servants* (coming up to Wellborn with bows and cringes).—Ah, sweet sir—

*Well.*—Nay, all's forgiven, all forgotten, friends;  
And, for a lucky omen to my project,  
Shake hands, and end all quarrels in the cellar.

*All the Servants.*—Agreed, agreed! Still merry, Master Wellborn.  
(Exeunt servants.)

*Well.*—Faith, a right worthy and a liberal lady,  
Who can at once so kindly meet my purposes,  
And brave the flouts of censure, to redeem  
Her husband's friends! When, by this honest plot,  
The world believes she means to heal my wants  
With her extensive wealth, each noisy creditor  
Will be struck mute; and I, thus left at large,  
To practise on my uncle, Overreach,  
May work, perhaps, the measure to redeem  
My mortgaged fortune, which he stripped me of  
When headlong dissipation quelled my reason.  
The fancy pleases: if the plot succeed,  
'Tis a new way to pay old debts, indeed.

## ACT II. SCENE I.

The skirts of Lady Allworth's park.

Enter Marrall and Sir Giles.

*Sir Giles.*—He's gone, I warrant thee; this commission crushed him.

*Marrall.*—Your worship has the way on't, and ne'er miss  
To squeeze these unthrifths into air: and yet  
The chap-fall'n justice did his part, returning,  
For your advantage, the certificate,  
Against his conscience and his knowledge, too,—  
With your good favor,—to the utter ruin  
Of the poor farmer.

*Sir G.*—'Twas for these good ends  
I made him a justice: he that bribes his belly  
Is certain to command his soul.

*Mar.*—I wonder,  
Still with your license, why, your worship, having  
The power to put this thin-gut in commission,  
You are not in't yourself?

*Sir G.*—Thou art a fool;  
In being out of office, I am out of danger;  
Where, if I were a justice, besides the trouble,  
I might, or out of wilfulness, or error,  
Run myself finely into a præmunire,  
And so become a prey to the informer.  
No, I'll have none on't: 'tis enough I keep  
Greedy at my devotion: so he serve  
My purposes, let him hang, or damn, I care not;  
Friendship is but a word.

*Mar.*—You are all wisdom.

*Sir G.*—I would be worldly wise; for the other wisdom  
That does prescribe us a well-governed life,  
And to do right to others, as ourselves,  
I value not an atom.

*Mar.*—What course take you—  
With your good patience—to hedge in the manor

Of your neighbor, Master Frugal? As 'tis said,  
He will nor sell, nor borrow, nor exchange;  
And his land, lying in the midst of your many lordships,  
Is a foul blemish.

*Sir G.*—I have thought of't, Marrall,  
And it shall take. I must have all men sellers,  
And I the only purchaser.

*Mar.*—'Tis most fit, sir.

*Sir G.*—I'll, therefore, buy some cottage near his manor;  
Which done, I'll make my men break ope' his fences,  
Ride o'er his standing corn, and in the night  
Set fire to his barns, or break his cattle's legs;  
These trespasses draw on suits, and suits expenses  
Which I can spare, but will soon beggar him.  
When I have harried him thus two or three years,  
Though he sue in forma pauperis, in spite  
Of all his thrift and care, he'll grow behind-hand.

*Mar.*—The best I ever heard! I could adore you.

*Sir G.*—Then, with the favor of my man of law,  
I will pretend some title: want will force him  
To put it to arbitrement; then, if he sell  
For half the value, he shall have ready money,  
And I possess his land.

*Mar.*—'Tis above wonder!

Wellborn was apt to sell, and needed not  
These fine arts, sir, to hook him in.

*Sir G.*—Well thought on.

That varlet, Marrall, lives too long, to upbraid me  
With my close cheat put upon him. Will nor cold,  
Nor hunger kill him?

*Mar.*—I know not what to think on't.

I've used all means; and, the last night, I caused  
His host, the tapster, to turn him out of doors;  
And have been since with all your friends and tenants,  
And, on the forfeit of your favor, charged them.  
Though a crust of mouldy bread would keep him from  
starving,

Yet they should not relieve him. This is done, sir.

*Sir G.*—That was something, Marrall; but thou must go further,

And suddenly, Marrall.

*Mar.*—Where, and when you please, sir.

*Sir G.*—I'd have thee seek him out, and, if thou can'st,  
Persuade him that 'tis better steal than beg.  
Then, if I prove he has but robbed a hen-roost,  
Not all the world shall save him from the gallows.  
Do anything to work him to despair,  
And 'tis thy masterpiece.

*Mar.*—I'll do my best, sir.

*Sir G.*—I'm now on my main work, with the Lord Lovell,  
The gallant-minded, popular Lord Lovell,  
The minion of the people's love. I hear  
He's come into the country; and my aims are,  
To insinuate myself into his knowledge,  
And then invite him to my house.

*Mar.*—I have you:

This points to my young mistress.

*Sir G.*—She must part with  
That humble title, and the honorable,  
Right honorable, Marrall, my right honorable daughter,  
If all I have, or e'er shall get, will do it!  
I'll have her well attended; there are ladies  
Of errant knights decayed, and brought so low,  
That, for cast clothes and meat, will gladly serve her;  
And 'tis my glory, though I come from the city,  
To have their issue, whom I have undone,  
To kneel to mine, as bond-slaves.

*Mar.*—'Tis fit state, sir.

*Sir G.*—And, therefore, I'll not have a chambermaid  
That ties her shoes, or any meaner office,  
But such whose fathers were right worshipful.  
'Tis a rich man's pride! there having ever been  
More than a feud, a strange antipathy,  
Between us and true gentry.

Enter Wellborn.

*Mar.*—See, who's here, sir!

*Sir G.*—Hence, monster! prodigy!

*Wellborn.*—Call me what you will;—

I am your nephew, sir, your sister's son.

*Sir G.*—Avoid my sight! thy breath's infectious, rogue!

I shun thee as a leprosy, or the plague.

Come hither, Marrall. This is the time to work him.

*Mar.*—I warrant you, sir.

(Exit Sir Giles.)

*Well.*—By this light, I think he's mad.

*Mar.*—Mad! had you ta'en compassion on yourself,

You long since had been mad.

*Well.*—You've ta'en a course,

Between you and my venerable uncle,

To make me so.

*Mar.*—The more pale-spirited you,

That would not be instructed. I swear deeply—

*Well.*—By what?

*Mar.*—By my religion.

*Well.*—Thy religion?

The devil's creed! But what would you have done?

*Mar.*—Had there been but one tree in all the shire,

Nor any hope to compass a penny halter,

Before, like you, I had outlived my fortunes,

A withe had served my turn to hang myself.

I'm zealous in your cause: pray, hang yourself,

And presently, as you love your credit.

*Well.*—I thank you.

*Mar.*—Will you stay till you die in a ditch?

Or, if you dare not do the feat yourself,

But that you'll put the state to charge and trouble,

Is there no purse to be cut? house to be broken?

Or market woman with eggs, that you may murder,

And so dispatch the business?

*Well.*—Here's variety,

I must confess; but I'll accept of none

Of all your gentle offers, I assure you.

*Mar.*—Why, have you hope ever to eat again,

Or drink? or be the master of three farthings?

If you like not hanging, drown yourself; take some  
course

For your reputation.

*Well.*—'Twill not do, dear tempter,

With all the rhethoric the fiend hath taught you.

I am as far as thou art from despair;

Nay, I have confidence, which is more than hope,

To live, and suddenly, better than ever.

*Mar.*—Ha! ha! these castles you build in the air

Will not persuade me or to give or lend

A token to you.

*Well.*—I'll be more kind to thee:

Come, thou shalt dine with me.

*Mar.*—With you!

*Well.*—Nay, more, dine gratis.

*Mar.*—Under what hedge, I pray you? or at whose cost?

Are they padders, or gipsies, that are your consorts?

*Well.*—Thou art incredulous; but thou shalt dine,

Not alone at her house, but with a gallant lady;

With me and with a lady.

*Mar.*—Lady! what lady?

With the lady of the lake, or queen of fairies?

For, I know, it must be an enchanted dinner.

*Well.*—With the Lady Allworth, knave.

*Mar.*—Nay, now there's hope.

Thy brain is cracked.

*Well.*—Mark, there, with what respect

I am entertained.

*Mar.*—With choice, no doubt, of dog-whips.

Why, dost thou ever hope to pass her porter?

*Well.*—'Tis not far off, go with me; trust thine own eyes.

*Mar.*—Troth, in my hope, or my assurance, rather,

To see thee curvet and mount like a dog in a blanket,

If ever thou presume to pass her threshold,

I will endure thy company.

*Well.*—Come along, then.

(Exeunt.)



## SCENE II.

The hall in Lady Allworth's house.

Enter Watchall, Furnace, Order, Amble and Allworth.

*Allworth.*—Your courtesies o'erwhelm me: I much grieve  
To part from such true friends: and yet find comfort.  
My attendance on my honorable lord,  
Whose resolution holds to visit my lady,  
Will speedily bring me back.

(Wellborn and Marrall without. Wellborn knocks.

Exit Watchall.)

*Mar.*—Dar'st thou venture further?

*Well.*—Yes, yes, and knock again.

(Knocks.)

*Order.*—'Tis he; disperse!

*Amble.*—Perform it bravely.

*Furnace.*—I know my cue, ne'er doubt me.

(Exeunt.)

Enter Watchall, Wellborn and Marrall.

*Watchall.*—Beast that I was, to make you stay! Most welcome!  
You were long since expected.

*Well.*—Say so much

To my friend, I pray you.

*Wat.*—For your sake, I do, sir.

*Mar.*—For his sake!

*Well.*—Mum; this is nothing.

*Mar.*—More than ever

I'd have believed, though I had found it in my primer.

*All.*—When I have given you reasons for my late harshness,  
You'll pardon and excuse me; for, believe me,  
Though now I part abruptly, in my service  
I will deserve it.

*Mar.*—Service! with a vengeance!

*Well.*—I'm satisfied. Farewell, Tom.

*All.*—All joy stay with you!

(Exit.)

Enter Amble.

*Amb.*—You're happily encountered; I ne'er yet  
Presented one so welcome as, I know,  
You will be to my lady.

*Mar.*—This is some vision;  
Or, sure, these men are mad to worship a dunghill.  
It cannot be a truth.

*Well.*—Be still a pagan,  
An unbelieving infidel; be so, miscreant,  
And meditate on blankets and on dog-whips!

Enter Furnace.

*Fur.*—I'm glad you're come: until I know your pleasure,  
I knew not how to serve up my lady's dinner.

*Mar.*—His pleasure! is it possible?

*Well.*—What's thy will?

*Fur.*—Marry, sir, I have  
Some rails and quails, and my lady willed me ask you  
What kind of sauces best affect your palate,  
That I may use my utmost skill to please it.  
(Wellborn whispers to Furnace.)

*Mar.*—(Walking about amazed.) The devil's entered this  
cook: sauce for his palate,  
That, on my knowledge,  
Durst wish but cheese-parings and brown bread on  
Sundays!

*Well.*—That way I like them best.

*Fur.*—It shall be done, sir.

*Well.*—What think you of the hedge we shall dine under?  
Shall we feed gratis?

*Mar.*—I know not what to think;  
Pray you, make me not mad.

Enter Order.

*Ord.*—This place becomes you not;  
Pray you, walk, sir, to the dining-room.

*Well.*—I am well here,

Till her ladyship quits her chamber.

*Mar.*—Well here, say you?

'Tis a rare change! but yesterday, you thought

Yourself well in a barn, wrapped up in pease-straw.

Enter *Tabitha* and *Abigail*.

*Tabitha.*—Oh! you're much wished for, sir.

*Abigail.*—Last night, my lady

Dreamt of you; and her first command this morning

Was to have notice, sir, of your arrival.

*Wat.*—See my lady.

Enter *Lady Allworth*.

*Lady Allworth.*—I come to meet you, and languished till I  
saw you.

This first kiss is for form: I allow a second

To such a friend. (Wellborn salutes her.)

*Mar.*—To such a friend! heaven bless me!

*Well.*—I'm wholly yours; yet, madam, if you please

To grace this gentleman with a salute—

(Puts *Marrall* over to *Lady Allworth*.)

*Mar.*—Salute me at his bidding!

(Retreats toward the door.)

*Well.*—I shall receive it

As a most high favor.

*Lady A.*—Your friends are ever welcome to me.

*Well.*—Run backward from a lady! and such a lady!

*Mar.*—To kiss her foot is, to poor me, a favor

I am unworthy of—

*Lady A.*—Nay, pray you, rise;

And since you are so humble, I'll exalt you:

You shall dine with me to-day, at mine own table.

*Mar.*—Your ladyship's table! I'm not good enough

To sit at your steward's board.

*Lady A.*—You are too modest;

I will not be denied.

Enter Order.

*Ord.*—Dinner is ready for your ladyship.

*Lady A.*—Come, Master Wellborn—

(To Marrall, who is retreating again.)

Nay, keep us company.

*Mar.*—I was ne'er so graced.

(Lady Allworth and Wellborn take Marrall by the hand—he bowing with the greatest servility—they retire, followed by Abigail, Tabitha, Amble and Watchwell.)

Enter Furnace.

*Ord.*—So, we have played our parts, and are come off well;  
But if I know the mystery, why my lady  
Consented to it, may I perish!

*Fur.*—Would I had

The roasting of his heart that cheated him,  
And forces the poor gentleman to these shifts!  
By fire!—for cooks are Persians, and swear by it,—  
Of all the griping and extorting tyrants  
I ever heard or read of, I ne'er met  
A match to Sir Giles Overreach.

*Wat.*—What will you take

To tell him so, fellow Furnace?

*Fur.*—Just as much

As my throat is worth; for that would be the price on't  
To have a usurer that starves himself,  
To grow rich, and then purchase, is too common:  
But this Sir Giles feeds high; keeps many servants;  
Rich in his habit, vast in his expenses!  
Yet he, to admiration, still increases  
In wealth and lordships.

*Ord.*—He frights men out of their estates,

And breaks through all law-nets, made to curb ill men,  
As they were cobwebs. No man dares reprove him.  
Such a spirit to dare, and power to do, were never  
Lodged so unluckily.

Enter Amble.

*Amb.*—Ha! ha! I shall burst.

*Ord.*—Contain thyself, man.

*Fur.*—Or make us partakers  
Of your sudden mirth.

*Amb.*—Ha! ha! my lady has got  
Such a guest at her table!—this term-driver, Marrall,  
This snip of an attorney!

*Wat.*—What of him, man?

*Amb.*—The knave feeds so slovenly!

*Fur.*—Is this all?

*Amb.*—My lady  
Drank to him for fashion's sake, or to please Master  
Wellborn;  
As I live, he rises, and takes up a dish  
In which there were some remnants of a boiled capon,  
And pledges her in white broth!

*Fur.*—Nay, 'tis like  
The rest of his tribe.

*Amb.*—And when I brought him wine,  
He leaves his chair, and, after a leg or two,  
Most humbly thanks my worship—my worship!

*All the Servants.*—Ha! ha! ha!

*Ord.*—Risen already?

*Fur.*—My lady frowns.

*Amb.*—I shall be chid. (Exit Furnace.)

Enter Lady Allworth, Wellborn and Marrall.

*Lady A.*—You attend us well!  
Let me have no more of this: I observed your jeering.  
Sir, I will have you know, whom I think worthy  
To sit at my table,  
When I am present, is not your companion.

*Ord.*—(Aside.) Nay, she'll preserve what's due to her.

*Lady A.*—(To Wellborn). You are master  
Of your own will. I know so much of manners,  
19—Part I, Vol. XIII.

As not to inquire your purposes; in a word,  
To me you are ever welcome, as to a house  
That is your own.

*Well.*—(To Marrall.) Mark that.

*Mar.*—With reverence, sir,  
And it like your worship.

*Well.*—Trouble yourself no further;  
Dear madam, my heart's full of zeal and service,  
However in my language I am sparing.  
Come, Master Marrall.

*Mar.*—I attend your worship.

(Exeunt Watchall, Wellborn and Marrall.)

*Lady A.*—(To servants.) I see in your looks you are sorry  
and you know me  
An easy mistress: be merry, I have forgot all.  
Order and Amble, come with me; I must give you  
Further directions.

*Ord.*—What you please.

*Amb.*—We are ready.

(Exeunt.)

### SCENE III.

The open country. Enter Wellborn and Marrall.

*Wellborn.*—I think I'm in a good way.

*Marrall.*—Good? Sir; the best way;  
The certain best way.

You are worshipful—and I hope you will become right  
worshipful.

*Well.*—Is't for your ease  
You keep your hat off?

*Mar.*—Ease, and it like your worship!  
I hope Jack Marrall shall not live so long  
To prove himself such an unmannerly beast,  
Though it hail hazel-nuts, as to be covered  
When your worship's present.

*Well.*—(Aside.) Is not this a true rogue,  
That, out of mere hope of future cozenage,  
Can turn thus suddenly? 'tis rank already.

*Mar.*—I know your worship's wise, and needs no counsel;  
Yet if, in my desire to do you service,  
I humbly offer my advice (but still  
Under correction), I hope I shall not  
Incur your high displeasure.

*Well.*—No; speak freely.

*Mar.*—Then, in my judgment, sir, my simple judgment,  
(Still with your worship's favor) I could wish you  
A better habit; for this cannot be  
But much distasteful to the noble lady  
That loves you:  
I have twenty pounds here,  
Which, out of my true love, I'll presently  
Lay down at your worship's feet; 'twill serve to buy you  
A riding suit.

*Well.*—But where's the horse?

*Mar.*—My gelding  
Is at your service: nay, you shall ride me,  
Before your worship shall be put to the trouble  
To walk afoot. Alas! when you are lord  
Of this lady's manor (as I know you will be),  
You may with the lease of glebe land, called Knave's-  
Acre,  
A place I would manure, requite your vassal.

*Well.*—I thank thy love; but will make no use of it.  
Did I want clothes, think'st thou I could not have 'em  
For one word to my lady?

*Mar.*—As if I knew not that!

*Well.*—Come, I'll tell thee a secret, and so leave thee.  
I'll not give her the advantage, though she be  
A gallant-minded lady, after we're married,  
To hit me in the teeth, and say, she was forced  
To buy my wedding clothes—  
No. I'll be furnished something like myself,  
And so farewell. For thy suit touching Knave's-Acre,  
When it is mine, 'tis thine. (Exit.)

*Mar.*—I thank your worship.  
How was I cozened in the calculation

Of this man's fortune! My master cozened, too,  
Whose pupil I am in the art of undoing men;  
For that is our profession! Well, well, Master Wellborn,  
You are of a sweet nature, and fit again to be cheated;  
Which, if the Fates please, when you are possessed  
Of the land and lady, you, sans question, shall be.  
I'll presently think of the means.

*Sir Giles.*—(Without.) Sirrah, take my horse.  
I'll walk, to get me an appetite; 'tis but a mile;  
And exercise will keep me from being pury.

Enter Sir Giles.

Ha! Marrall!—Is he conjuring? Perhaps  
The knave has wrought the prodigal to do  
Some outrage on himself, and now he feels  
Compunction in his conscience for't: no matter,  
So it be done. Marrall! Marrall!

*Mar.*—Sir!

*Sir G.*—How succeed we  
In our plot on Wellborn?

*Mar.*—Never better, sir.

*Sir G.*—Has he hanged or drowned himself?

*Mar.*—No, sir, he lives;  
Lives once more to be made a prey to you,  
A greater prey than ever.

*Sir G.*—Art thou in thy wits?  
If thou art, reveal this miracle, and briefly.

*Mar.*—A lady, sir, is fallen in love with him.

*Sir G.*—With him! What lady?

*Mar.*—The rich Lady Allworth.

*Sir G.*—Thou dolt! how dar'st thou speak this?

*Mar.*—I speak truth,  
And I do so but once a year, unless  
It be to you, sir. We dined with her ladyship,  
I thank his worship.

*Sir G.*—His worship!

*Mar.*—As I live, sir,



I dined with him at the great lady's table,  
Simple as I stand here; and saw when she kissed him,  
And would, at his request, have kissed me, too.

*Sir G.*—Why, thou rascal!

To tell me these impossibilities.  
Dine at her table! and kiss him! or thee!—  
Impudent varlet, have not I myself,  
Ten times attempted, since her husband's death,  
In vain, to see her, though I came—a suitor?  
And yet your good solicitorship, and rogue Wellborn,  
Were brought into her presence, feasted with her!—  
But that I know thee a dog that cannot blush,  
This most incredible lie would call up one  
On thy buttermilk cheeks.

*Mar.*—Shall I not trust my eyes, sir,

Or taste? I feel her good cheer in my belly.

*Sir G.*—You shall feel me, if you give not over, sirrah.

Recover your brains again, and be no more gulled  
With a beggar's plot, assisted by the aids  
Of serving-men and chambermaids;  
Or I'll quit you  
From my employments.

*Mar.*—Will you credit this yet?

On my confidence of their marriage, I offered Wellborn—

I'd give a crown now I durst say his worship— (Aside.)  
My nag and twenty pounds.

*Sir G.*—Did you so, idiot?

(Strikes him.)

Was this the way to work him to despair,

Or rather to cross me?

(Beats him.)

*Mar.*—Will your worship kill me?

*Sir G.*—No, no; but drive the lying spirit out of you.

*Mar.*—He's gone.

*Sir G.*—I've done, then. Now, forgetting

Your late imaginary feast and lady,  
Know, my Lord Lovell dines with me to-morrow;  
Be careful naught be wanting to receive him;  
And bid my daughter's women trim her up;

Though they paint her, so she catch the lord, I'll thank  
'em.

There's money for my late blows.

*Mar.*—(Aside.) I may yet cry quittance;  
There may be a time—

*Sir G.*—Do you grumble?

*Mar.*—No, sir.

(*Exeunt.*)

### ACT III. SCENE I.

The skirts of Lady Allworth's park. Enter Lovell and Allworth.

*Lovell.*—(Speaking off as he enters.) Drive the coach round  
the hill; something in private  
I must impart to Allworth.

*Allworth.*—Oh, my lord,  
What sacrifice of rev'rence, duty, watching,  
Although I could put off the use of sleep,  
And ever wait on your commands to serve 'em,  
What dangers, though in ne'er so horrid shapes,  
Nay, death itself, though I should run to meet it,  
Can I, and with a thankful willingness, suffer;  
But still the retribution will fall short  
Of your bounties showered upon me!

*Lov.*—Nay, good youth,  
Till what I purpose be put into act,  
Do not o'erprize it. Since you've trusted me  
With your soul's nearest, nay, her dearest secret,  
Rest confident, 'tis in a cabinet locked  
Treachery shall never open. I have found you  
More zealous in your love and service to me  
Than I have been in my rewards.

*All.*—Still great ones,  
Above my merit,  
You have been  
More like a father to me than a master:  
'Pray you, pardon the comparison.

*Lov.*—I allow it;  
And to give you assurance that I am pleased in't,

My carriage and demeanor to your mistress,  
Fair Margaret, shall truly witness for me,  
I can command my passions.

*All.*—'Tis a conquest

Few men can boast of, when they are tempted.—Oh!

*Lov.*—Why do you sigh? Can you be doubtful of me?

By that fair name I in the wars have purchased,  
And all my actions, hitherto untainted,  
I will not be more true to mine own honor  
Than to thee, Allworth!

*All.*—Were you to encounter with a single foe,

The victory were certain: but to stand  
The charge of two such potent enemies,  
At once assaulting you, as wealth and beauty,  
And those, too, seconded with power, is odds  
Too great for Hercules.

*Lov.*—Speak your doubts and fears,

Since you will nourish 'em, in plainer language,  
That I may understand 'em.

*All.*—My much-loved lord, were Margaret only fair,

You might command your passion;  
But, when the well-tuned accents of her tongue  
Make music to you, and with numerous sounds  
Assault your hearing,  
Hippolytus himself would leave Diana,  
To follow such a Venus.

*Lov.*—Love hath made you

Poetical, Allworth.

*All.*—Grant all these beat off

(Which, if it be in man to do, you'll do it),  
Mammon, in Sir Giles Overreach, steps in  
With heaps of ill-got gold, and as much land  
As would tire  
A falcon's wings in one day to fly over.  
I here release your trust:  
'Tis happiness enough for me to serve you,  
And sometimes, with chaste eyes, to look upon her.

*Lov.*—Why, shall I swear?

*All.*—Oh, by no means, my lord!

*Lov.*—Suspend

Your judgment till the trial. How far is't  
To Overreach's house?

*All.*—At the most, some half hour's riding;  
You'll soon be there.

*Lov.*—And you the sooner freed  
From your jealous fears.

*All.*—Oh, that I durst but hope it! (Exeunt.)

## SCENE II.

The hall in Sir Giles' house. Enter Sir Giles, Greedy and Marrall.

*Sir Giles.*—Spare for no cost; let my dressers crack with  
the weight  
Of rare viands.

*Greedy.*—Store indeed's no sore, sir.

*Sir G.*—That proverb fits your stomach, Master Greedy.

*Greedy.*—It does indeed, Sir Giles; I do not like to see a table  
ill-spread; poor, meagre, just sprinkled o'er with salad,  
sliced beef, giblets and pigs' pettitoes. But the sub-  
stantials! Oh, Sir Giles, the substantials! The state  
of a fat turkey, now! The decorum, the grandeur he  
marches in with! Oh, I declare, I do much honor a  
chine of beef! Oh, I do reverence a loin of veal!

*Sir G.*—And let no plate be seen, but what's pure gold,  
Or such whose workmanship exceeds the matter  
That it is made of: let my choicest linen  
Perfume the room; and, when we wash, the water,  
With precious powders mixed, so please my lord  
That he may with envy wish to bathe so ever.

*Marrall.*—'Twill be very chargeable.

*Sir G.*—Avant, you drudge!

Now all my labored ends are at the stake,  
Is't a time to think of thrift? Call in my daughter,  
Call in my daughter. (Exit Marrall.)

And, Master Justice, since you love choice dishes,  
And plenty of 'em—

*Gree.*—As I do, indeed, sir,  
Almost as much as to give thanks for them.

*Sir G.*—I do confer that providence, with my power  
Of absolute command to have abundance,  
To your best care.

*Gree.*—I'll punctually discharge it,  
And give the best directions.  
(*Aside.*) Now am I,  
In mine own conceit, a monarch; at the least,  
Arch-president of the boiled, the roast, the baked;  
I'd not exchange my throne for the Great Mogul's;  
For which I will eat often; and give thanks,  
When my belly's braced up like a drum; and that's  
pure justice. (Exit.)

*Sir G.*—It must be so: should the foolish girl prove modest,  
She may spoil all; she had it not from me,  
But from her mother; I was ever forward,  
As she must be; and, therefore, I'll prepare her.

Enter Marrall, followed by Margaret and two female attendants.

Alone, Margaret—

Alone—and let your women wait without.

(Exeunt women and Marrall.)

*Margaret.*—Your pleasure, sir?

*Sir G.*—Ha! this is a neat dressing!  
These Orient pearls and diamonds well placed, too!  
The gown affects me not,—it should have been  
Embroidered o'er and o'er with flowers of gold;  
But these rich jewels and quaint fashion help it.  
How like you your new woman,  
The Lady Downfallen?

*Marg.*—Well, for a companion;  
Not as a servant.

*Sir G.*—Is she humble, Meg,  
And careful, too, her ladyship forgotten?

*Marg.*—I pity her fortune.

*Sir G.*—Pity her! Trample on her.

I took her up in an old tamin gown,  
E'en starved for very want of food, to serve thee;  
And if I understand she but repines  
To do thee any duty, though ne'er so servile,  
I'll pack her to her knight, where I have lodged him,  
Into the counter, and there let 'em howl together.

*Marg.*—You know your own ways; but for me, I blush  
When I command her, that was once attended  
With persons not inferior to myself  
In birth.

*Sir G.*—In birth! Why, art thou not my daughter,  
The blest child of my industry and wealth?  
Part with these humble thoughts, and apt thyself  
To the noble state I labor to advance thee;  
Or, by my hopes to see thee honorable,  
I will adopt a stranger to my fortunes,  
And throw thee from my care. Do not provoke me.

*Marg.*—I will not, sir; mould me which way you please.

Enter Greedy, with a napkin round his neck and a dumpling  
in his hand.

*Grec.*—Sir Giles, Sir Giles—

*Sir G.*—How! interrupted?

*Grec.*—'Tis matter of importance.

The cook, sir, is self-willed, and will not learn  
From my experience. There's a fawn brought in, sir,  
And, for my life, I cannot make him roast it whole,  
With a Norfolk dumpling in the belly of it:  
And, sir, we wise men know, without the dumpling  
'Tis not worth three-pence.

*Sir G.*—Would it were whole in thy belly,  
To stuff it out! Cook it any way: pr'ythee, leave me.

*Grec.*—Without order for the dumpling?

*Sir G.*—Let it be dumbled  
Which way thou wilt; or tell him, I will scald him  
In his own caldron.

*Gree.*—I had lost my stomach,  
Had I lost my dumpling.

(Exit.)

*Sir G.*—But to our business, Meg: You've heard who dines here?

*Marg.*—I have, sir.

*Sir G.*—'Tis an honorable man;

A lord, Meg, and commands a regiment  
Of soldiers; and, what's rare, is one himself,  
A bold and understanding one; and to be  
A lord, and a good leader, in one volume,  
Is granted unto few, but such as rise up  
The kingdom's glory.

Reënter Greedy.

*Gree.*—I'll resign my office,  
If I be not better obeyed.

*Sir G.*—'Ods boddikins, art thou frantic?

*Gree.*—Frantic! 'twould make me frantic, and stark mad,  
Were I not a justice of peace and quorum, too:  
Which this rebellious cook cares not a straw for.  
There are a dozen of woodcocks—  
He has found out  
A new device for sauce, and will not dish 'em  
With toasts and butter.

*Sir G.*—Cook! Rogue, obey him!

I've given the word: pray, now remove yourself  
To a collar of brawn, and trouble me no further.

*Gree.*—I will, and meditate what to eat at dinner. (Exit.)

*Sir G.*—And as I said, Meg, when this gull disturbed us,  
This honorable lord, this colonel,  
I would have to be thy husband.

*Marg.*—There's too much disparity  
Between his quality and mine, to hope it.

*Sir G.*—I more than hope, and doubt not to effect it.  
Be thou no enemy to thyself: my wealth  
Shall weigh his titles down, and make you equals.  
Now for the means to assure him thine, observe me:  
Remember, he's a courtier, and a soldier,

And not to be trifled with; and, therefore, when  
He comes to woo you, see you do not coy it:  
This mincing modesty hath spoiled many a match  
By a first refusal, in vain after hoped for.

*Marg.*—You'll have me, sir, preserve the distance that  
Confines a virgin?

*Sir G.*—Virgin me no virgins!

I must have you lose that name, or you lose me;  
I'll have you private—start not—I say, private:  
If you are my true daughter,  
You'll venture alone with one man, though he came,  
Like Jupiter to Semele, and come off, too:  
And, therefore, when he kisses you, kiss close.

*Marg.*—I've heard this is the wanton's fashion, sir,  
Which I must never learn.

*Sir G.*—Learn anything,

And from any creature, that may make thee great;  
E'en from the devil himself: stand not on form;  
Words are no substances.

*Marg.*—With your leave, sir—in worldly policy,  
This is not the way to make me his wife:  
My virgin scruples overcome so soon,  
Cannot but assure him,  
I, that am light to him, will not hold weight  
Whene'er by others tempted: so, in judgment,  
If, to obey you, I forget my honor,  
He must and will forsake me.

*Sir G.*—How! forsake thee!

Do I wear a sword for fashion? or is this arm  
Shrunk up, or withered? Does there live a man,  
Of that large list I have encountered with,  
Can truly say I e'er gave inch of ground  
Not purchased with his blood that did oppose me?  
Forsake thee! He dares not.  
Though all his captains, echoes to his will,  
Stood armed by his side, to justify the wrong—  
Spite of his lordship, and his colonelship,  
Or the judge's favor—I would make him render  
A bloody and a strict account, and force him,



By marrying thee, to cure thy wounded honor.  
Meg, I have said it.

Enter Marrall, hastily.

*Mar.*—Sir, sir, the man of honor's come,  
Newly alighted.

*Sir G.*—In there, without reply, and wait my call:  
And do as I command, or thou art lost.

(Exit Margaret.)

What! is the loud music I gave orders for  
Ready to receive him?

*Mar.*—'Tis, sir.

*Sir G.*—Let them sound

A princely welcome.

(Exit Marrall.)

Roughness, a while leave me:

For fawning now, a stranger to my nature,

Must make way for me. (Music.)

Enter Marrall, Lovell and Allworth, preceded and followed  
by servants.

*Lovell.*—Sir, you meet your trouble.

*Sir G.*—What you are pleased to style so is an honor  
Above my worth and fortunes.

*Allworth.*—(Aside.) Strange! so humble!

Reënter Greedy, with a napkin under his chin.

*Sir G.*—Faugh! (Points to napkin, which Greedy instantly  
snatches off and puts behind him.) A justice of  
peace, my lord. (Presents Greedy to him.)

*Lov.*—Your hand, good sir.

*Gree.*—(Aside.) This is a lord: some would think this a  
favor;

But I had rather have my hand in my dumpling.

*Sir G.*—Room for my lord.

*Lov.*—I miss, sir, your fair daughter,  
To crown my welcome.

*Sir G.*—May it please my lord  
To taste a glass of Greek wine first; and suddenly  
She shall attend, my lord.  
*Lov.*—You'll be obeyed, sir. (Exeunt all but Sir Giles.)  
*Sir G.*—'Tis to my wish; as soon as come, ask for her!  
Why, Meg! Meg Overreach!

Reënter Margaret.

How! tears in your eyes!  
Hah! dry 'em quickly, or I'll dig 'em out.  
Is this a time to whimper? meet that greatness  
That flies into thy bosom: think what 'tis  
For me to say, My honorable daughter!  
No more; but be instructed, or expect—  
He comes.

Reënter Lovell, Allworth, Greedy and Marrall.

A well-formed girl, my lord.  
*Lov.*—As I live, a rare one! (Salutes her.)  
*All.*—(Aside.) He's ta'en already: I am lost.  
*Sir G.*—That kiss  
Came twanging off; I like it. Quit the room.  
(Exeunt Greedy, Marrall and Allworth.)  
A little bashful, my good lord, but you,  
I hope, will teach her boldness.  
*Lov.*—I am happy  
In such a scholar; but—  
*Sir G.*—I am too old to learn,  
And therefore leave you to yourselves. Remember!  
(Aside to Margaret and exit.)  
*Lov.*—You see, fair lady, your father is solicitous  
To have you change the barren name of virgin  
Into a hopeful wife.  
*Marg.*—His haste, my lord,  
Holds no power o'er my will.  
*Lov.*—But o'er your duty.  
*Marg.*—Which, forced too much, may break.

*Lov.*—Bend, rather, sweetest:

Think of your years.

*Marg.*—Too few to match with yours.

*Lov.*—I can advance you.

*Marg.*—To a hill of sorrow:

Where every hour I may expect to fall,

But never hope firm footing. You are noble—

I of a low descent, however rich;

Oh, my good lord, I could say more, but that

I may not trust these walls.

*Lov.*—Pray you, trust my ear, then. (They whisper.)

Reënter Sir Giles, listening.

*Sir G.*—Close at it! whispering!—this is excellent!

And, by their postures, a consent on both parts.

Reënter Greedy.

*Gree.*—Sir Giles! Sir Giles!

*Sir G.*—The great fiend stop that clapper!

*Gree.*—It must ring out, sir, when my belly rings noon,

The baked meats are run out, the roast turned powder.

*Sir G.*—Stop your insatiate jaws, or

I shall powder you.

*Gree.*—Beat me to dust, I care not;

In such a cause as this, I'll die a martyr.

*Sir G.*—Disturb my lord,

When he is in discourse?

*Gree.*—Is't a time to talk,

When we should be munching?

*Sir G.*—Mum, villain; vanish! Shall we break a bargain

Almost made up?

(Exit, thrusting Greedy off before him.)

*Lov.*—Lady, I understand you,

And wish you happy in your choice; believe it,

I'll be a careful pilot to direct

Your yet uncertain bark to a port of safety.

*Marg.*—So shall your honor save two lives, and bind us  
Your slaves forever.

*Lov.*—I'm in the act rewarded,  
Since it is good: howe'er, you must put on  
An amorous carriage towards me, till our purpose  
Be brought to the wished end.

*Marg.*—I'm prone to that.

*Lov.*—Now break we off our conference. Sir Giles!  
Where is Sir Giles?

Enter Sir Giles, Allworth, Greedy and Marrall.

*Sir Giles.*—My noble lord; and how  
Does your lordship find her?

*Lov.*—Apt, Sir Giles, and coming;  
And I like her the better.

*Sir G.*—(Aside.) So do I, too.

*Lov.*—Yet should we take forts at the first assault,  
'Twere poor in the defendant: I will confirm her  
With a love-letter or two, which I shall have  
Delivered by my page: we must, for form, give way to't.

*Sir G.*—With all my soul.  
A towardly gentleman!  
Your hand, good Master Allworth: know my house  
Is ever open to you.

*Allworth.*—(Aside.) 'Twas shut till now.

*Sir G.*—(To Margaret.) Well done, well done, my honorable  
daughter!  
Thou'rt so already. (Puts her over to Allworth.) Know  
this gentle youth,  
And cherish him, my honorable daughter!

*Marg.*—I shall, with my best care.

*Servants.*—(Without.) Room, room—make way there for my  
lady.

*Str G.*—What noise?

*Greedy.*—More stops  
Before we go to dinner! Oh, my guts!

Enter six servants, Lady Allworth and Wellborn.

*Lady Allworth.*—(To Wellborn.) If I find welcome,  
You shall share in't; if not, I'll back again;  
For I come armed for all can be objected.

*Lov.*—How! the Lady Allworth!

*Sir G.*—And thus attended!

*Marrall.*—No, I am a dolt,  
The spirit of lies hath entered me.

*Lov.*—Noble lady,  
This is a favor, to forestall my visit,  
The service of my life can never equal.

*Lady A.*—My lord, I laid wait for you; and much hoped  
You would have made my poor house your first inn;  
And therefore, doubting that you might forget me,  
I borrowed so much from my long restraint,  
And took the air, in person to invite you.

*Lov.*—Your bounties are so great, they rob me, madam,  
Of words to give you thanks.

*Lady A.*—Good Sir Giles Overreach.  
How dost thou, Marrall?—Liked you my meat so ill,  
You'll dine no more with me?

*Gree.*—I will, when you please,  
An it like your ladyship.

*Lady A.*—When you please, Master Greedy;  
If meat can do't, you shall be satisfied.  
And now, my lord, pray take into your knowledge  
This gentleman: howe'er his outside's coarse,  
(Presents Wellborn.)

His inward linings are as fine and fair  
As any man's:  
And howsoe'er his humor carries him  
To be thus accoutred, or what taint soe'er,  
For his wild life, hath stuck upon his fame,  
He may, ere long, with boldness rank himself  
With some that have contemned him. Sir Giles Over-  
reach,  
If I am welcome, bid him so.

*Sir G.*—My nephew!

He has been too long a stranger: faith you have:  
Pray let it be mended.

(All converse apart but Sir Giles and Marrall.)

*Mar.*—Well, sir, what do you mean?

This is rogue Wellborn, monster, prodigy,  
No man of worship,  
Much less your nephew.

*Sir G.*—Well, sirrah, we shall reckon  
For this hereafter.

*Mar.*—I'll not lose my jeer,  
Though I be beaten dead for't.

*Well.*—Let my silence plead  
In my excuse, my lord, till better leisure  
Offer itself, to hear a full relation  
Of my poor fortunes. (Aside to Lovell.)

*Lov.*—I would hear, and help them. (Bell rings.)

*Gree.*—Ah!

*Sir G.*—Your dinner waits you.

*Lov.*—Pray you, lead; we follow.

*Lady A.*—Dear Master Wellborn, come. You are my guest.  
(Takes Wellborn's hand. Music. Exeunt all but Greedy.)

*Gree.*—Dear Master Wellborn! so she said: Heaven, heaven!  
If my belly would give me leave, I could ruminate  
All day on this: I've granted twenty warrants  
To have him committed, from all the prisons in the shire,  
To Nottingham gaol! And now, "Dear Master Well-  
born!"  
And "My good nephew!"—But I play the fool,  
To stand here prating, and forget my dinner.

Reënter Marrall.

Are they set, Marrall?

*Marrall.*—Long since. (Greedy going, Marrall stops him.)  
Pray you, a word, sir.

*Gree.*—No wording now.

*Mar.*—In troth, I must: my master,  
Knowing you are his good friend, makes bold with you,  
And does entreat you, more guests being come in  
Than he expected, especially his nephew,  
The table being full, too, you would excuse him,  
And wait to sup with him on the cold meat.

*Gree.*—How! no dinner,  
After all my care?

*Mar.*—'Tis but a penance for  
A meal; besides, you broke your fast.

*Gree.*—That was  
But a bit to stay my stomach. A man in commission  
Give place to a tatterdemalion?

*Mar.*—No big words, sir!  
Should his worship hear you—

*Gree.*—Lose my dumpling, too,  
And buttered toast and woodcocks!

*Mar.*—Come, have patience.  
If you will dispense a little with your justiceship,  
And sit with the maids below there, you'll have dump-  
ling,  
Woodcock and buttered toast, too, by and by.

*Gree.*—This revives me:  
I will gorge there sufficiently.

*Mar.*—There's your way, sir. (Exit.)

*Gree.*—I fear we shall have but short commons below. I am  
no chameleon, to feed on air; nor Frenchman, to feast  
on a soused frog, or regale on an ounce of beef in a  
Mediterranean sea of soup: I love to see the board well  
spread, groaning under its savory burden, smoking hot,  
from spit, furnace and caldron. Odds me, Sir Giles!  
(Exit.)

Enter Sir Giles.

*Sir Giles.*—She's caught! Oh, woman! What, neglect my lord,  
And all her compliments apply to Wellborn!  
In the wine she drinks,  
He being her pledge, she sends him burning kisses,  
And sits on thorns till she be private with him.

But why grieve I  
At this! It makes for me: if she prove his,  
All that is hers is mine, as I will work him.

Enter Marrall.

*Marrall.*—Sir, the whole board is troubled at your rising.

*Sir G.*—No matter, I'll excuse it. Pr'ythee, Marrall,  
Watch an occasion to invite my nephew  
To speak with me in private.

*Mar.*—Who! the rogue  
The lady scorned to look on?

*Sir G.*—Sirrah! Sirrah!

Enter Lovell, Margaret and Allworth.

(To Lovell.) My good lord, excuse my manners.

*Lovell.*—There needs none, Sir Giles;  
I may ere long say father, when it please  
My dearest mistress to give warrant to it.

*Sir G.*—She shall seal to it, my lord, and make me happy.

*Lady Allworth.*—(Without.) Nay, Master Wellborn—

*Sir G.*—Grosser and grosser!

Enter Lady Allworth, Wellborn and servants.

*Lady A.*—Provide my coach,  
I'll instantly away. My thanks, Sir Giles,  
For my entertainment. (Marrall whispers Wellborn.)

*Sir G.*—'Tis your nobleness  
To think it such.

*Lady A.*—I must do you a further wrong,  
In taking away your honorable guest.

*Lov.*—I wait on you, madam; farewell, good Sir Giles!

*Lady A.*—Nay, come, Master Wellborn— (Exit Marrall.)  
I must not leave you behind; in sooth, I must not.

*Sir G.*—Rob me not, madam, of all joys at once;  
Let my nephew stay behind: he shall have my coach,  
And, after some small conference between us,  
Soon overtake your ladyship.



*Lady A.*—Stay not long, sir.

*Lov.*—Farewell, dear Margaret! You shall every day  
Hear from your servant by my faithful page.

*Allworth.*—"Tis a service I am proud of.

(Music. Exeunt all but Sir Giles, Wellborn and Margaret.)

*Sir G.*—Daughter, to your chamber. (Exit Margaret.)

You may wonder, nephew,  
After so long an enmity between us,  
I should desire your friendship.

*Wellborn.*—So I do, sir;

'Tis strange to me.

*Sir G.*—But I'll make it no wonder;

And, what is more, unfold my nature to you.  
We worldly men, when we see friends and kinsmen  
Past hope sunk in their fortunes, lend no hand  
To lift them up, but rather set our feet  
Upon their heads, to press them to the bottom,  
As, I must yield, with you I practised it;  
But, now I see you in a way to rise,  
I can and will assist you. This rich lady  
(And I am glad of't) is enamored of you.  
(Wellborn shakes his head.)

'Tis too apparent, nephew.

*Well.*—No such thing!

Compassion, rather, sir.

*Sir G.*—Well, in a word,

Because your stay is short, I'll have you seen  
No more in this base shape; nor shall she say,  
She married you like a beggar, or in debt.

*Well.*—(Aside.) He'll run into the noose, and save my labor.

*Sir G.*—You have a trunk of rich clothes, not far hence,  
In pawn; I will redeem 'em, and, that no clamor  
May taint your credit for your petty debts,  
You shall have wherewithal to cut 'em off,  
And go a free man to the wealthy lady.

*Well.*—This done, sir, out of love, and no ends else—

*Sir G.*—As it is, nephew.

*Well.*—Binds me still your servant.

*Sir G.*—No compliments: you're waited for. Ere you've supped,  
You shall hear from me. My coach, knaves, for my  
nephew!

To-morrow I will visit you.

*Well.*—Here's an uncle

In a man's extremes! How much they do belie you,  
That say you are hard-hearted!

*Sir G.*—My deeds, nephew,  
Shall speak my love; what men report, I weigh not.

#### ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Room in Lady Allworth's House. Lovell seated, sealing a letter, and Allworth waiting on him.

*Lovell.*—'Tis well. May this succeed.

I now discharge you  
From further service: mind your own affairs;  
I hope they'll prove successful.

*Allworth.*—What is blest

With your good wish, my lord, cannot but prosper.  
Let after-times report, and to your honor,  
How much I stand engaged, for I want language  
To speak my debt; yet, if a tear or two  
Of joy, for your much goodness, can supply  
My tongue's defects, I could—

*Lor.*—Nay, do not melt;

This ceremonial thanks, to me's superfluous.

*Sir Giles.*—(Without.) Is my lord stirring?

*Lor.*—'Tis he! Oh, here's your letter.

(Takes the letter from the table and gives it to Allworth.)

Let him in.

(Allworth opens the door and stands retired.)

Enter Sir Giles and Marrall.

*Sir G.*—A good day to my lord!

*Lov.*—You are an early riser,  
Sir Giles.

*Sir G.*—And reason, to attend your lordship.

*Lov.*—And you, too, Master Greedy, up so soon!

*Greedy.*—In troth, my lord, after the sun is up,  
I cannot sleep: for I've a foolish stomach  
That croaks for breakfast. With your lordship's favor,  
I have a serious question to demand  
Of my worthy friend, Sir Giles.

*Lov.*—Pray you, use your pleasure.

*Gree.*—How far, Sir Giles, and pray you, answer me,  
Upon your credit, hold you it to be  
From your manor-house to this of my Lady Allworth's?

*Sir G.*—Why, some four mile.

*Gree.*—How! four mile, good Sir Giles—  
Upon your reputation, think better;  
For four miles riding  
Could not have raised so huge an appetite  
As I feel gnawing on me.

*Marrall.*—Whether you ride  
Or go afoot, you're that way still provided,  
An't please your worship.

*Sir G.*—(Coming in.) How now, sirrah! prating  
Before my lord! no deference! Go to my nephew,  
See all his debts discharged, and help his worship  
To fit on his rich suit.

*Mar.*—(Aside.) I may fit you, too. (Exit.)

*Lov.*—I have writ this morning  
A few lines to my mistress, your fair daughter.

*Sir G.*—'Twill fire her, for she's wholly yours already.  
Sweet Master Allworth, take my ring; 'twill carry you  
To her presence, I dare warrant you; and there plead  
For my good lord, if you shall find occasion.  
That done, pray ride to Nottingham, get a license,  
Still by this token. (To Lovell.) I will have't dis-  
patched,  
And suddenly, my lord, that I may say,  
My honorable, nay, right honorable daughter.

*Gree.*—(Stopping Allworth.) Take my advice, young gentleman; get your breakfast;  
'Tis unwholesome to ride fasting; I'll eat with you,  
And that abundantly.

*Sir G.*—Some Fury's in that gut;  
Hungry again! did you not devour this morning  
A shield of brawn and a barrel of Colchester oysters?

*Gree.*—Why, that was, sir, only to scour my stomach,  
A kind of preparative.

*Lov.*—Haste your return.

*All.*—I will not fail, my lord. (Exit.)

*Gree.*—Nor I, to line  
My Christmas coffer. (Exit.)

*Sir G.*—To my wish (they sit), we're private.  
I come not to make offer with my daughter  
A certain portion, that were poor and trivial:  
In one word I pronounce, all that is mine,  
In lands or leases, ready coin or goods,  
With her, my lord, comes to you; nor shall you have  
One motive to induce you to believe  
I live too long; since every year I'll add  
Something unto the heap, which shall be yours, too.

*Lov.*—You are a right kind father.

*Sir G.*—You shall have reason  
To think me such.  
How do you like this seat of Lady Allworth's?  
It is well wooded and well watered, the acres  
Fertile and rich; would it not serve, for change,  
To entertain your friends in a summer progress?  
What thinks my noble lord?

*Lov.*—'Tis a wholesome air,  
And well-built pile; and she that's mistress of it,  
Worthy the large revenue.

*Sir G.*—She the mistress!  
It may be so for a time; but, let my lord  
Say, only that he likes it, and would have it,  
I say, ere long 'tis his.

*Lov.*—Impossible!

*Sir G.*—You do conclude too fast, not knowing me  
Nor the engines that I work by. 'Tis not alone  
The Lady Allworth's lands—for those, once Wellborn's,  
As, by her dotage on him, I know they will be,  
Shall soon be mine; but point out any man's  
In all the shire, and say they lie convenient  
And useful for your lordship, and once more  
I say aloud, they're yours.

*Lov.*—I dare not own  
What's by unjust and cruel means extorted;  
My fame and credit are more dear to me,  
Than so to expose 'em to be censured by  
The public voice.

*Sir G.*—You run, my lord, no hazard.  
Your reputation shall still stand as fair  
In all good men's opinions, as now;  
For, though I do condemn report myself,  
As a mere sound, I still will be so tender  
Of what concerns you, in all points of honor,  
That the immaculate whiteness of your fame  
Shall ne'er be sullied with one taint or spot.  
All my ambition is to have my daughter  
Right honorable, which my lord can make her;  
And, might I live to dance upon my knee  
A young Lord Lovell, born by her unto you,  
I write nil ultra to my proudest hopes.

*Lov.*—Are you not frightened with the imprecations  
And curses of whole families, made wretched  
By your sinister practices?

*Sir G.*—Yes, us rocks are,  
When foamy billows split themselves against  
Their flinty ribs; or, as the moon is moved,  
When wolves, with hunger pined, howl at her brightness.  
I'm of a solid temper, and, like these,  
Steer on a constant course.  
Nay, when my ears are pierced with widows' cries,  
And undone orphans wash with tears my threshold,  
I only think what 'tis to have my daughter  
Right honorable; and 'tis a powerful charm

Makes me insensible of remorse or pity,  
Or the least sting of conscience.

*Lov.*—I admire

The toughness of your nature.

*Sir G.*—"Tis for you,

My lord, and for my daughter, I am marble;  
Nay, more, if you will have my character  
In little, I enjoy more true delight  
In my arrival to my wealth these dark  
And crooked ways, than you shall e'er take pleasure  
In spending what my industry hath compassed.  
My haste commands me hence; in one word, therefore,  
Is it a match, my lord?

*Lov.*—I hope that is past doubt, now.

*Sir G.*—Then rest secure; not the hate of all mankind here,

Nor fear of what can fall on me hereafter,  
Shall make me study aught but your advancement  
One story higher: an earl! if gold can do it.  
Dispute not my religion, nor my faith;  
Though I am borne thus headlong by my will,  
You may make choice of what belief you please,  
To me they're equal; so, my lord, good morrow.

(Exit.)

*Lov.*—He's gone; I wonder how the earth can bear him!

I, that have lived a soldier,  
And stood the enemy's violent charge undaunted,  
To hear this blasphemous monster, am all bathed  
In a cold sweat; yet, like a mountain, he  
Is no more shaken than Olympus is  
When angry Boreas loads his double head  
With sudden drifts of snow.

Enter Lady Allworth.

*Lady Allworth.*—Save you, my lord!

Disturb I not your privacy?

*Lov.*—No, good madam;

For your own sake, I'm glad you came no sooner,  
Since this bold, bad man, Sir Giles Overreach,  
Made such a plain discovery of himself,

And read this morning such a devilish matins,  
That I should think it a sin next to his  
Not to repeat it.

*Lady A.*—I ne'er pressed, my lord,  
On others' privacy; yet, against my will,  
Walking for health's sake, in the gallery here,  
I was made,  
So loud and vehement he was, partaker  
Of his tempting offers.  
But, my good lord, if I may use my freedom,  
As to an honored friend—

*Lov.*—You lessen else  
Your favor to me.

*Lady A.*—I dare, then, say thus:  
However common men  
Make sordid wealth the object and sole end  
Of their industrious aims, 'twill not agree  
With those of noble blood, of fame, and honor.

*Lov.*—Madam, 'tis confessed;  
But what infer you from it?

*Lady A.*—This, my lord:  
I allow the heir of Sir Giles Overreach, Margaret,  
A maid well qualified, and the richest match  
Our north part can make boast of; yet she cannot,  
With all that she brings with her, stop their mouths  
That never will forget who was her father;  
Or that my husband Allworth's lands, and Wellborn's  
(How wrung from both, needs no repetition),  
Were real motives that more worked your lordship  
To join your families, than her form and virtues;  
You may conceive the rest.

*Lov.*—I do, good madam,  
And long since have considered it. I know,  
The sum of all that makes a just man happy,  
Consists in the well choosing of his wife;  
And 'tis my resolution ne'er to wed  
With the rich Margaret, Overreach's daughter.

*Lady A.*—(Aside.) I am glad to hear this.  
Why, then, my lord, pretend your marriage to her?

Dissimulation but ties false knots  
On that straight line, by which you hitherto  
Have measured all your actions.

*Lov.*—I make answer,  
And aptly, with a question. Wherefore have you,  
That, since your husband's death, have lived a strict  
And chaste nun's life, on the sudden given yourself  
To visits and entertainments? Think you, madam,  
'Tis not grown public conference? or the favors  
Which you so prodigally have thrown on Wellborn,  
Incur not censure?

*Lady A.*—I'm innocent here; and, on my life, I swear,  
My ends are good.

*Lov.*—So, on my soul, are mine  
To Margaret:  
And, since this friendly privacy does serve  
As a fair offered means unto ourselves  
To search each other further—you having shown  
Your care of me, I, my respect to you—  
Deny me not, I dare not yet say more,  
An afternoon's discourse.

*Lady A.*—Affected coyness might deny your suit;  
But, such your honor, frankness shall become me,  
And bid my tongue avow my honest heart;  
I shall attend your lordship.

*Lov.*—My heart thanks you.

(*Exeunt.*)

## SCENE II.

A Village. Enter Froth and Tapwell from the House.

*Tapwell.*—Undone, undone! This was your counsel Froth.

*Froth.*—Mine! I defy thee; did not Master Marrall—  
He has marred all, I am sure—strictly command us.  
On pain of Sir Giles Overreach's displeasure,  
To turn the gentleman out of doors?

*Tap.*—'Tis true;  
But now he's his uncle's darling; and has got



Master Justice Greedy, since he filled his belly,  
At his commandment to do anything.  
Woe, woe to us!

*Froth.*—He may prove merciful.

*Tap.*—Troth, we do not deserve it at his hands.

*Froth.*—Then, he knows all the passages of our house  
As the receiving of stolen goods, and so forth.  
When he was rogue Wellborn, no man would believe  
him;  
And then his information could not hurt us;  
But now he is right worshipful again,  
Who dares but doubt his testimony?

*Tap.*—Undone, undone! Methinks  
I see thee, Froth, already in a cart;  
And my hand hissing,  
If I 'scape the halter, with the letter R  
Printed upon it.

*Froth.*—Would that were the worst!  
That were but nine days' wonder. As for credit,  
We've none to lose; but we shall lose his custom;  
And there's the devil of it.

*Tap.*—He has summoned all his creditors by the drum  
'Tis said, he has found out such a "*new way*  
*To pay his old debts,*" as, 'tis very likely,  
He shall be chronicled for it.

*Froth.*—But are you sure his worship  
Comes this way to my lady's?  
(Drum, and shouting of "Brave Master Well-  
born!")

*Tap.*—Hark, I hear him.

*Froth.*—Be ready with your petition, and present it  
To his good grace.

Enter Greedy, Wellborn in a rich habit. Marrall, Vintner,  
Tailor, with other Creditors—Order, Furnace, Amble.  
Tapwell and Froth, kneeling, deliver a Petition.

*Wellborn.*—How's this? petitioned too!  
But note what miracles the payment of

A little trash, and a rich suit of clothes,  
Can work upon these rascals! I shall be,  
I think, Prince Wellborn.

*Marrall.*—When your worship's married,  
You may be:—I know what I hope to see you.

*Well.*—Then look thou for advancement.

*Mar.*—To be known

Your worship's bailiff, is the mark I shoot at.

*Well.*—And thou shalt hit it.

*Mar.*—Pray you, sir, dispatch

These needy followers; and for my admittance,

(*Tapwell and Froth flattering Greedy.*)

Provided you'll defend me from Sir Giles,

Whose service I am weary of, I'll say something

You shall give thanks for.

*Well.*—Fear not Sir Giles.

(*Wellborn and Marrall retire, and converse apart.*)

*Greedy.*—Who?

Tapwell—I remember; thy wife brought me,

Last new-year's tide, a couple of fat turkeys.

*Tap.*—And shall do, every Christmas, let your worship

But stand my friend now.

*Grace.*—How! with Master Wellborn?

I can do anything with him, on such terms.

(*Wellborn advances.*)

See you this honest couple? (*To Wellborn.*) They're  
good souls

As ever drew out spigot. Have they not

A pair of honest faces?

*Well.*—I o'erheard you,

And the bribe be promised. You are cozened in 'em;

For, of all the scum that grew rich by my riots,

This, for a most unthankful knave, and this,

For a base quean and thief, have worst deserved me;

And therefore speak not for them. By your place,

You're rather to do me justice. Lend me your ear;

Forget his turkeys, and call in his license,

And every season I will send you venison,

To feast a mayor and corporation.

(Goes and converses with Marrall.)

*Gree.*—I'm changed o' the sudden in my opinion—Mum.

Come near. (To Tapwell and Froth.) Nearer, rascal!

And, now I view him better, did you e'er see

One look so like an arch knave? his very countenance,

Should an understanding Judge but look upon him,

Would hang him, though he were innocent.

*Tap. and Froth.*—Worshipful sir—

*Gree.*—No; though the great Turk came instead of turkeys,

To beg my favor, I'm inexorable.

Thou'st an ill name; I here do damn thy license,

Forbidding thee ever to tap or draw;

For, instantly, I will, in mine own person,

Command the constable to pull down thy sign,

And do 't before I eat.

*Froth.*—No mercy?

*Gree.*—Vanish!—

If I show any, may my promised venison choke me!

*Tap.*—Unthankful knaves are ever so rewarded.

(Exit with Froth into the house.)

*Well.*—On, Master Greedy; I'll be with you at dinner.

*Gree.*—For heaven's sake, don't stay long;

'Tis almost ready.

(Exit.)

*Well.*—Speak; what are you?

*Vintner.*—A decayed vintner, sir.

That might have thrived, but that your worship broke  
me

With trusting you with muscadine and eggs,

And five-pound suppers, with your after-drinkings,

When you lodged upon the Bankside.

*Well.*—I remember.

*Vin.*—I've not been hasty, nor e'er laid to arrest you;

And therefore, sir—

*Well.*—Thou art an honest fellow;

I'll set thee up again;

(To Marrall.) See his bill paid.

(Tailor advances.) What are you?

*Tailor.*—A tailor once, but now mere botcher.

I long time gave you credit for rich clothes;

But, your failing in payment,

I was removed from the shop-board, and confined  
Under a stall.

*Well.*—(To Marrall.) See him paid; and botch no more.

*Tail.*—I ask no interest, sir.

*Well.*—Such tailors need not;

If their bills are paid in one and twenty years,

They're seldom losers. See these men discharged.

(Marrall motions to the Creditors to imply he will  
do so.)

And since old debts are cleared by a new way,

A little bounty will not misbecome me;

There's something for you all.

(Throws purse to Creditors.)

*All the Creditors.*—Brave Master Wellborn!

(Drums and shouts. Exeunt Creditors.)

*Well.*—Leave me, good friends; attend upon your lady.

(Exeunt Amble, Furnace and Order.)

Now, Master Marrall, what's the weighty secret,  
You promised to impart?

*Mar.*—Sir, time nor place

Allow me to relate each circumstance;

This only, in a word: I know Sir Giles

Will come upon you for security

For all the money which he now has lent you;

This you must not consent to.

As he grows in heat, as I am sure he will,

Be you but rough, and say he's in your debt

Ten times the sum, upon sale of your land;—

I'd a hand in 't, I speak it to my shame,—

When you were defeated of it.

*Well.*—That's forgiven.

*Mar.*—I shall deserve it: Then urge him to produce

The deed in which you passed it over to him,

Which, I know, he'll have about him, to deliver

To the Lord Lovell. I'll instruct you further,

As I wait on your worship: If I play not my prize  
To your full content, and your uncle's much vexation,  
Hang up Jack Marrall.

*Well.*—I rely upon thee.

(*Exeunt.*)

### SCENE III.

A room in Sir Giles' house. Enter Margaret, with a letter in her hand, and Allworth.

*Allworth.*—Whether to yield the first praise to my lord's  
Unequalled self-denial, or your constant sweetness  
I yet rest doubtful.

*Margaret.*—Give it to Lord Lovell;  
For what in him was bounty, in me's duty.  
I make but payment of a debt to which  
My vows, in that high office registered,  
Are faithful witnesses.

*All.*—'Tis true, my dearest;  
Yet—when I call to mind how many fair ones  
Make willful shipwreck of their faiths and oaths,  
To fill the arms of greatness;  
While you, with matchless virtue, thus hold out,  
Spurning at honor, when it comes to court you—  
I am so tender of your good, that faintly  
I wish myself that right, you're pleased to do me.

*Marg.*—To me what's title, when content is wanting?  
Or the smooth brow, and wealth,  
Of a pleased sire that slaves me to his will;  
And, so his vain ambition may be feasted  
By my obedience, and he see me great,  
Leaves to my soul nor faculties nor power  
To make her own election?

*All.*—But the dangers  
That follow the repulse—

*Marg.*—To me they're nothing;  
Let Allworth love, I cannot be unhappy.  
Suppose the worst—that, in his rage, he kill me;

A tear or two, by you dropped on my hearse,  
 In sorrow for my fate, will call back life  
 So far as but to say, that I die yours;  
 I then shall rest in peace.

*All.*—Heaven avert  
 Such trials of your true affection to me!  
 Nor will it unto you, that are all mercy,  
 Show so much rigor. But, since we must run  
 Such desperate hazards, let us do our best  
 To steer between 'em.

*Marg.*—Lord Lovell is our friend;  
 And though but a young actor, second me  
 In doing to the life what he has plotted.

Enter Sir Giles.

The end may yet prove happy. (*Aside.*) Now, my All-  
 worth.

*All.*—(*Aside.*) To your letter, and put on a seeming anger.

*Marg.*—I'll pay my lord all debts due to his title;  
 And, when with terms not taking from his honor  
 He does solicit me, I shall gladly hear him;  
 But, in this peremptory, nay, commanding way,  
 To fix a time and place, without my knowledge,  
 A priest to tie the knot can ne'er be undone  
 Till death unloose it, is a confidence  
 In his lordship will deceive him.

*All.*—I hope better, good lady.

*Marg.*—Hope, sir, what you please; for me,  
 I must take a safe and secure course; I have  
 A father, and without his full consent,  
 Though all lords of the land kneeled for my favor,  
 I can grant nothing.

*Sir Giles.*—(*Aside.*) I like this obedience;  
 But whatsoever my lord writes, must and shall be  
 Accepted and embraced. Sweet Master Allworth,  
 You show yourself a true and faithful servant  
 To your good lord; he has a jewel of you.  
 How! frowning, Meg? Are these looks to receive  
 A messenger from my lord? What's this? give me it.

*Marg.*—A piece of arrogant paper!

*Sir G.*—(Reads.) "Fair mistress, from your servant learn, all joys

That we can hope for, if deferred, prove toys;  
Therefore this instant, and in private, meet  
A husband, that will gladly at your feet  
Lay down his honors, tendering them to you  
With all content, the church being paid her due."

Is this the arrogant piece of paper? fool!  
Will you still be one? I' the name of madness, what  
Could his good honor write more to content you?  
Is there aught else to be wished, after these two  
That are already offered? Marriage first,  
And lawful pleasure after:—What would you more?

*Marg.*—Why, sir, I would be married like your daughter;  
Not hurried away i' the night I know not whither,  
Without all ceremony; no friends invited,  
To honor the solemnity.

*All.*—An't please your honor,  
For so before to-morrow I must style you,  
My lord desires this privacy, in respect  
His honorable kinsmen are far off,  
And his desires to have it done, brook not  
So long delay as to expect their coming;  
And yet he stands resolved, with all due pomp,  
To have his marriage at court celebrated,  
When he has brought your honor up to London.

*Sir G.*—He tells you true; 'tis the fashion, on my knowledge;  
Yet the good lord, to please your peevishness,  
Must put it off, forsooth!

*Marg.*—I could be contented,  
Were you but by, to do a father's part,  
And give me in the church.

*Sir G.*—So my lord have you,  
What do I care who gives you? Since my lord  
Does purpose to be private, I'll not cross him.  
I know not, Master Allworth, how my lord  
May be provided, and therefore there's a purse

Of gold; 'twill serve this night's expense; to-morrow  
I'll furnish him with any sums.

Use my ring to my chaplain; he is beneficed  
At my manor of Got'em, and called Parson Willdo;  
'Tis no matter for a license; I'll bear him out in 't.

*Marg.*—With your favor, sir—what warrant is your ring?  
He may suppose I got that twenty ways,  
Without your knowledge; and then, to be refused  
Were such a stain upon me!—if you pleased, sir,  
Your presence would do better.

*Sir G.*—Still perverse!  
I say again, I will not cross my lord;  
Yet I'll see you righted, too—paper and ink there!

*All.*—Sir, 'tis ready here.

*Sir G.*—I thank you. I can write, then, to my chaplain.  
(Sits down and writes.)

*All.*—(Sits.) Sir, sir—  
You may, if you please, leave out the name of my lord;  
In respect he would be private, and only write—  
Marry her to this gentleman.

*Sir G.*—Well advised.  
'Tis done! Away!  
(Gives Allworth the paper—both rise.)  
My blessing? Girl, thou hast it!  
Nay, no reply, begone—good Master Allworth,  
This shall be the best night's work you ever made.

*All.*—I hope so, sir.  
(Exeunt Margaret and Allworth.)

*Sir G.*—Now all's cock-sure—  
Methinks I hear already knights and ladies  
Say, Sir Giles Overreach, how is it with  
Your honorable daughter?  
My ends, my ends are compassed! Then, for Wellborn  
And the lands—were he once married to the widow—  
I have him here.

(Touching his forehead with his finger.)  
I can scarce contain myself,  
I am so full of joy; nay, joy all over!

(Exit.)



## ACT V. SCENE I.

The hall in Lady Allworth's house. Lovell and Lady Allworth seated at table.

*Lady Allworth.*—By this you know how strong the motives were,

That did, my lord, induce me to dispense  
A little with my gravity, to advance  
The plots and projects of the downtrod Wellborn.

*Lovell.*—What you intended, madam,  
For the poor gentleman hath found good success;  
For, as I understand, his debts are paid,  
And he once more furnished for fair employment;  
But all the arts that I have used, to raise  
The fortunes of, your joy and mine, young Allworth,  
Stand yet in supposition, though I hope well;  
For the young lovers are in wit more pregnant  
Than their years can promise.

*Lady A.*—Though my wishes  
Are with yours, my lord; yet give me leave to fear  
The building, though well-grounded. To deceive  
Sir Giles, that's both a lion and a fox  
In his proceedings, were a work beyond  
The strongest undertakers; not the trial  
Of two weak innocents.

*Lov.*—Despair not, madam;  
Hard things are compassed oft by easy means.  
The cunning statesman that believes he fathoms  
The counsels of all kingdoms on the earth,  
Is by simplicity oft over-reached.

*Lady A.*—May he be so!  
The young ones have my warmest wishes with them.

*Lov.*—Oh, gentle lady, prove as kind to me!  
You've deigned to hear, now grant my honest suit,  
And, if you may be won to make me happy,  
But join your hand to mine, and that shall be  
A solemn contract.

*Lady A.*—I were blind to my own good,  
Should I refuse it; yet, my lord, receive me  
As such a one, the study of whose whole life  
Shall know no other object but to please you.

*Lov.*—If I return not, with all tenderness,  
Equal respect to you, may I die wretched!

*Lady A.*—There needs no protestation, my lord,  
To her that cannot doubt.

Enter Wellborn.

You're welcome, sir;  
Now you look like yourself.

*Wellborn.*—And will continue  
Such, in my free acknowledgment that I am  
Your creature, madam—and will never hold  
My life mine own, when you please to command it.

*Lov.*—It is a thankfulness that well becomes you.

*Lady A.*—For me, I am happy  
That my endeavors prospered. Saw you of late  
Sir Giles, your uncle?

*Well.*—I heard of him, madam,  
By his minister, Marrall. He's grown into strange pas-  
sions  
About his daughter; this last night, he looked for  
Your lordship at his house; but, missing you,  
And Margaret not appearing, he is coming  
To seek her even here at Lady Allworth's.  
His wise head is much perplexed and troubled.

*Lov.*—I hope my project took.

*Lady A.*—I strongly hope it.

*Sir Giles.*—(Without.) Ha! find my daughter, thou huge lump  
of nothing,  
I'll bore thine eyes out, else.

*Well.*—May it please your lordship,  
For some ends of mine own, but to withdraw  
A little out of sight, though not of hearing,  
You may, perhaps, have sport.

*Lov.*—You shall direct me.

(Exit.)

*Sir G.*—(Without.) Idiot! booby! booby!

*Marrall.*—(Without.) Oh, oh, oh!

*Sir G.*—(Without.) I shall sol-fa you, rogue!

*Mar.*—(Without.) Sir, for what cause

Do you use me thus?

Enter Sir Giles, with distracted looks, driving in Marrall before him.

*Sir G.*—Cause, slave! Why, I am angry,  
And thou a subject only fit for beating,  
And so to cool my choler. Look to the writing;  
Let but the seal be broke upon the box,  
That has slept in my cabinet these three years,  
I'll rack thy soul for 't.

*Mar.*—(Aside.) I may yet cry quittance;  
Though now I suffer, and dare not resist.

*Sir G.*—Lady, by your leave; did you see my daughter,  
lady?  
And the lord her husband? Are they in your house?  
If they are, discover, that I may bid 'em joy;  
And, as an entrance to your place of honor,  
See you, on her left hand, bending down low,  
When she nods on you; which you must receive  
As a special favor.

*Lady A.*—When I know, Sir Giles,  
Her state requires such ceremony, I shall pay it;  
But, in the meantime,  
I give you to understand, I neither know  
Nor care where her honor is.

*Sir G.*—When you once see her  
Led and supported by the lord her husband,  
You'll be taught better. Nephew—

*Well.*—Well?

*Sir G.*—No more!

*Well.*—'Tis all I owe you.

*Sir G.*—Have your redeemed rags  
Made you thus insolent?

*Well.*—Insolent to you!

Why, what are you, sir, pray, unless in years,  
More than myself?

*Sir G.*—(Aside.) His fortune swells him:—

'Tis rank—he's married—

Sir, in calm language, though I seldom use it,

(Going to Lady Allworth.)

I am familiar with the cause that makes you  
Bear up thus bravely; there's a certain buzz  
Of a stolen marriage—do you hear?—of a stolen mar-  
riage;

In which, 'tis said, there's somebody hath been cozened—  
I name no parties.

*Well.*—Well, sir, and what follows?

(Lady Allworth turns away in astonishment.)

*Sir G.*—Marry this; since you are so peremptory; remember,

Upon mere hope of your great match, I lent you

Some certain moneys; put me in good security,

And suddenly, by mortgage or by statute,

Of some of your new possessions, or I'll have you

Dragged in your lavender robes to the gaol; you know  
me,

And therefore do not trifle.

*Well.*—Can you be

So cruel to your nephew, now he's in

The way to rise? Was this the courtesy

You did me, in pure love, and no ends else?

*Sir G.*—End me no ends! Engage the whole estate

And force your spouse to sign it—you shall have

Three or four thousand more, to roar and swagger,

And revel in drunken taverns.

*Well.*—And beg after—

Mean you not so?

*Sir G.*—My thoughts are mine, and free.

Shall I have security?

*Well.*—No, indeed, you shall not;

Nor bond, nor bill, nor bare acknowledgment—

Your great looks fright not me.

*Sir G.*—But my deeds shall.

(They draw.)

Outbraved!

*Lady A.*—Help! murder! murder!

Enter Amble, Watchall, Order and two Servants, with drawn swords.

*Well.*—Let him come on,

Armed with his cut-throat practices to guard him,  
With all his wrongs and injuries about him;  
The right that I bring with me will defend me,  
And punish his extortion.

*Sir G.*—That I had thee  
But single in the field!

*Lady A.*—You may; but make not  
My house your quarrelling scene.

*Sir G.*—Were't in a church,  
By heaven and hell, I'll do 't.

(Lady Allworth turns away.)

*Mar.*—(To Wellborn.) Now, put him to  
The showing of the deed.

*Well.*—This rage is vain, sir;

For fighting, fear not, you shall have your hands full  
Upon the least incitement; and—whereas  
You charge me with a debt of moneys to you—  
If there be law, howe'er you have no conscience,  
Either restore my land, or I'll recover  
A debt, that's truly due to me from you,  
In value ten times more than what you challenge.

*Sir G.*—I in thy debt! Oh, impudence! did I not purchase  
The land left by thy father, that rich land  
That had continued in Wellborn's name?

Enter two of Sir Giles' servants with a box.

Twenty descents, which, like a riotous fool,  
Thou didst make sale of? (To Servants.) Oh, you're  
come at last—  
Is not here inclosed  
The deed that does confirm it mine?

*Mar.*—Now, now!

(*Lady Allworth advances.*)

*Well.*—I do acknowledge none; I ne'er passed over  
Any such land; I grant, for a year or two,  
You had it in trust; which, if you do discharge,  
Surrendering the possession, you shall ease  
Yourself and me of chargeable suits in law;  
Which, if you prove not honest, as I doubt it,  
Must of necessity follow.

*Lady A.*—In my judgment,  
He does advise you well.

*Sir G.*—Good! good! Conspire  
With your new husband, lady; second him  
In his dishonest practices; but when  
This manor is extended to my use,  
You'll speak an humbler key, and sue for favor.

*Lady A.*—Never; do not hope it.

*Well.*—Let despair first seize me.

*Sir G.*—Yet, to shut up thy mouth, and make thee give  
Thyself the lie, the loud lie, I draw out  
The precious evidence; if thou canst forswear  
Thy hand and seal, and make a forfeit of  
Thy ears to the pillory—

(Two Servants place the box on the table. *Sir Giles*  
unlocks it and takes out the deed.)

See! here's that will make  
My interest clear. Ha!

*Lady A.*—(Looking over his shoulder.) A fair, blank skin  
of parchment!

*Well.*—Indented, I confess, and labels, too;  
But neither wax, nor words. How! thunderstruck?  
Is this your precious evidence? this, that makes  
Your interest clear?

*Sir G.*—I am overwhelmed with wonder!  
What prodigy is this? what subtle devil  
Hath razed out the inscription? the wax  
Turned into dust?—  
Do you deal with witches, rascal?

There is a statute for you, which will bring  
Your neck in a hempen circle; yes, there is;—  
And, now 'tis better thought for, cheater, know,  
This juggling shall not save you.

*Well.*—To save thee

Would beggar the stock of mercy.

(Retires with Lady Allworth up the stage.)

*Sir G.*—Marrall—Marrall!—

*Mar.*—Sir?

*Sir G.*—Though the witnesses are dead, your testimony  
Helped with an oath or two; and, for thy master,  
Thy liberal master, my good, honest servant,  
I know thou wilt swear anything, to dash  
This cunning sleight;—  
The deed being drawn, too,  
By thee, my careful Marrall, and delivered  
When thou wast present, will make good my title;  
Wilt thou not swear this?

*Mar.*—I! No, I assure you;

(Breaks from him.)

I have a conscience, not seared up like yours;  
I know no deeds.

*Sir G.*—Wilt thou betray me?

(Drawing his sword.)

*Mar.*—Keep him

(Wellborn opposes him.)

From using of his hands, I'll use my tongue  
To his no little torment.

*Sir G.*—Mine own varlet

Rebel against me!

*Mar.*—Yes, and uncase you, too;

The idiot, the patch, the slave, the booby,  
Your drudge, can now anatomize you, and lay open  
All your black plots, and level with the earth  
Your hill of pride; and shake,  
Nay, pulverize, the walls you think defend you.

*Sir G.*—Oh, that I had thee in my gripe, I'd tear thee  
Joint after joint!

*Mar.*—I know you are a tearer;  
But I'll have first your fangs pared off, and then  
Come nearer to you (Sir Giles retreats in despair) when  
I have discovered,  
And made it good before the judge, what ways  
And devilish practices you used to cozen with.

*Well.*—All will come out.

*Sir G.*—(Advancing.) But that I will live, rogue, to torture  
thee,  
And make thee wish, and kneel, in vain, to die,  
These swords, that keep thee from me, should fix here,  
Although they made my body but one wound,  
But I would reach thee; I play the fool,  
And make my anger but ridiculous.  
There will be a time and place, there will be cowards,  
When you shall feel what I dare do.

*Well.*—I think so;

You dare do any ill; yet want true valor,  
To be honest and repent.

*Sir G.*—They're words, I know not,  
Nor e'er will learn. Patience, the beggar's virtue,  
Shall find no harbor here.

Enter two of Sir Giles' Servants.

*Lady A.*—Whom have we here?

*Sir G.*—After these storms,  
At length a calm appears. My chaplain comes—

Enter Parson Willdo, with a letter in his hand.

Welcome, most welcome!

There's comfort in thy looks! Is the deed done?  
Is my daughter married? Say but so, my chaplain,  
And I am tame.

*Willdo.*—Married? Yes, I assure you.

*Sir G.*—Then vanish all sad thoughts!

My doubts and fears are in the titles drowned  
Of my honorable, my right honorable daughter.  
Now, you that plot against me,



And hoped to trip my heels up, that contemned me,  
Think on 't and tremble.

(Music.)

Enter Lovell behind.

They come! I hear the music.  
A lane there for my lord!

*Well.*—This sudden heat  
May yet be cooled, sir.

*Sir G.*—Make way there for my lady and my lord!

(Music.)

Enter two of Sir Giles' Servants, Margaret and Allworth.

*Marg.*—(Kneels.) Sir, first your pardon, then your blessing,  
with

Your full allowance of the choice I've made—  
Not to dwell  
Too long on words—this is my husband.

*Sir G.*—How!

*Allworth.*—So, I assure you; all the rites of marriage,  
With every circumstance, are past;  
And for right honorable son-in-law, you may say,  
Your dutiful daughter.

*Sir G.*—(Advancing hastily upon Willdo.) Devil! Are they  
married?

*Well.*—Do a father's part, and say, Heaven give them joy!

*Sir G.*—Confusion and ruin! Speak, and speak quickly!  
Or thou art dead.

(Seizes him.)

*Will.*—They're married.

*Sir G.*—Thou hadst better  
Have made a contract with the king of fiends,  
Than these. My brain turns!

*Will.*—Why this rage to me?  
Is not this your letter, sir? and these the words—  
"Marry her to this gentleman?"

*Sir G.*—It cannot;  
Nor will I e'er believe it, 'sdeath! I will not,—  
That I, who never left a print

Where I have trod, for the most curious search  
To trace my footsteps, should be gulled by children,  
Baffled and fooled, and all my hopes and labors  
Defeated and made void.

*Well.*—As it appears,

You are so, my grave uncle.

(Willdo retires.)

*Sir G.*—Village nurses

Revenge their wrongs with curses; I'll not waste  
A syllable; but thus I take the life  
Which, wretched, I gave to thee.

(Advances to kill Margaret.)

*Lov.*—(Stopping him.) Hold, for your own sake!

If charity to your daughter have quite left you.  
Will you do an act, though in your hopes lost here,  
Can leave no hope for peace or rest hereafter?  
Consider; at the best, you're but a man,  
And cannot so create your aims but that  
They may be crossed.

*Sir G.*—Lord! thus I spit at thee,

And at thy counsel; and again desire thee—

As thou art a soldier—if thy valor

Dares show itself where multitude and example

Lead not the way, let's quit the house, and change

Six words in private.

*Lov.*—I am ready.

*Lady A.*—Stay, sir!

Contest with one distracted?

*Well.*—You'll grow like him,

Should you answer his vain challenge.

*Sir G.*—Are you pale?

Borrow their helps; though Hercules call it odds,

I'll stand 'gainst all, as I am, hemmed in thus.—

Say, there were a squadron

Of pikes, lined through with shot, when I am mounted

Upon my injuries, shall I fear to charge 'em?

No; I'll through the battalia, and, that routed,

I'll fall to execution. (Attempts to draw his sword.)

Ha! I'm feeble;

Some undone widow sits upon mine arm,  
And takes away the use of't; and my sword,  
Glued to my scabbard with wronged orphans' tears,  
Will not be drawn.—

Ha! what are these? (Staggers back.) Sure, hangmen,  
That come to bind my hands, and then to drag me  
Before the judgment seat.—Now they are new shapes,  
And do appear like Furies, with steel whips  
To scourge my ulcerous soul. Shall I then fall  
Ingloriously, and yield?—No; spite of fate,  
I will be forced to hell, like to myself.  
Though you were legions of accurséd spirits,  
Thus would I fly among you.—

(Rushes madly toward his daughter, and falls exhausted; two servants raise him up; he somewhat recovers, looks wildly round, then, fixing his eyes with horrible reproach upon his daughter, drops his head upon his bosom, and is borne off by the two servants.)

*Mar.*—Was it not a rare trick,

An't please your worship, to make the deed nothing?

*Well.*—What arts didst use to raze out the conveyance?

*Mar.*—Certain minerals,

Incorporated in the ink and wax.

Besides, he gave me nothing; but still fed me  
With hopes and blows.

If it please your worship

To call to memory, this mad beast once caused me

To urge you, or to hang, or drown yourself:

I'll do the like to him, if you command me.

*Well.*—You are a rascal; and he that dares be false

To a master, though unjust, will very hardly

Be true to any other. Begone,

And look not for

Reward or favor from me, till thou'st learned

To mend thy wicked life. (Exit Marrall.)

*Marg.*—Oh, my poor father!

*All.*—Nay, weep not, dearest: though it show your piety,

What is decreed by heaven, we cannot alter.

*Lov.*—And heaven here gives a precedent to teach us  
That, when men leave religion, and turn atheists,  
Their own abilities leave them.—Pray you, take com-  
fort— (To Margaret.)

I will endeavor you shall be his guardians  
In his distractions—and for your land, Wellborn,  
I'll be an umpire  
Between you and this, the undoubted heir  
Of Sir Giles Overreach: for me, here's the anchor  
That I must fix on. (To Lady Allworth.)

*All.*—What you shall determine,  
My lord, we will allow of.

*Well.*—'Tis the language  
That I speak, too; but there is something else  
Beside the repossession of my land  
And payment of my debts that I must practice:  
I had a reputation, but 'twas lost  
In my loose course; and until I redeem it  
Some noble way, I am but half made up.  
It is a time of action: if your lordship  
Will please to confer a company upon me  
In your command, I doubt not, in my service  
To my king and country, but I shall do something  
That may make me right again.

*Lov.*—Your suit is granted,  
And you loved for the motion.

*Well.*—(To the audience.) Nothing, then,  
Now wants but your allowance; and in that  
Our all is comprehended: which, if you  
Grant willingly, as a fair favor due  
To the poet's and our labors, as you may—  
For we despair not, gentlemen, of the play—  
You may expect, the grace you show to-night,  
Will teach us how to act, our poets how to write.

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